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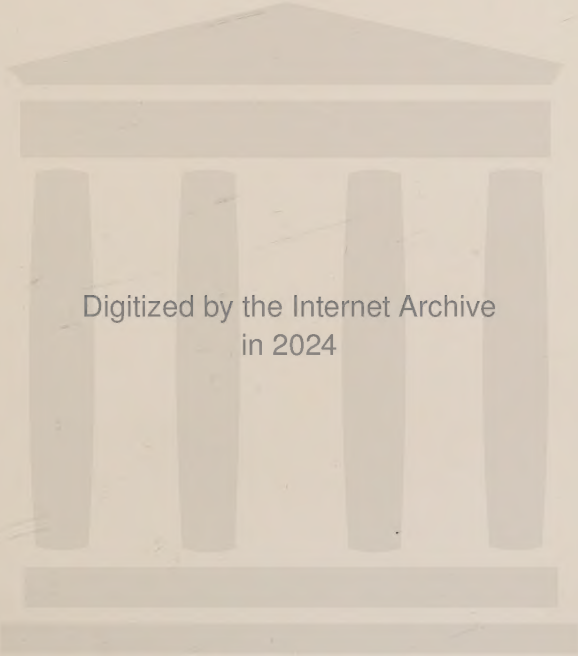
A BOOK OF  
THE CEVENNES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE DESERTS OF SOUTHERN FRANCE  
STRANGE SURVIVALS  
SONGS OF THE WEST  
A GARLAND OF COUNTRY SONG  
OLD COUNTRY LIFE  
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THE TAMARGUE FROM LA SOUCHE

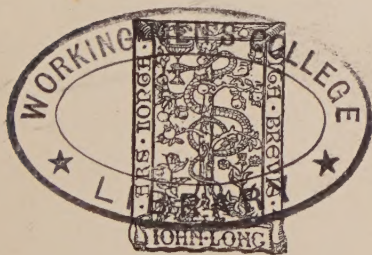


# A BOOK OF THE CEVENNES

BY S. BARING-GOULD, M.A.

"ILLE TERRARUM MIHI PRÆTER OMNES  
ANGULUS RIDET, UBI NON HYMETTO  
MELLA DECEDUNT, VIRIDIQUE CERTAT  
BACCA VENAFRO;  
VER UBI LONGUM, TEPIDASQUE PRÆBET  
JUPITER BRUMAS "

*Hor. Od. ii. 6.*



WITH FORTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS  
EIGHT OF WHICH ARE IN COLOUR, AND A MAP

London  
**John Long**  
Norris Street, Haymarket

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*First Published in 1907*

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## PREFACE

THE Cevennes are a mountain fringe to the up-lifted plateau of Central France, and are less visited by English tourists than any other mountainous district in la belle France. They have been most unjustly neglected. The scenery is singularly varied. The historical associations are rich, but mainly tragic.

This is not a guide-book, but an introduction to the country, to be supplemented by guide-books. The area is so extensive, that I have had to exercise restraint and limit myself to a few of the most salient features and most profitable centres whence excursions may be made. The Cevennes should be visited from March to June, afterwards the heat is too great for travelling to be comfortable. For inns, consult the annual volume of the French Touring Club; Baedeker and Joanne cannot always be relied on, as proprietors change, either for the better or for the worse. I have been landed in unsatisfactory quarters by relying on one or other of these guide-books, owing to the above-mentioned reason.

The "Touring-Club de France," Avenue de la Grande Armée 65, Paris, is doing excellent work in refusing to recommend a hotel unless the sanitary arrangements be up-to-date.



# THE CEVENNES

## CHAPTER I

### THE CRESCENT

The great central plateau—The true Cevennes—The character of the range—The watershed—The Garrigues—The Boutières—Mézenc—The Coiron—The mountains of the Vivarais—The Ardèche—Volcanoes—The Camisard country—Larzac—The Hérault—The Espinouse—The Montagne Noire—Neglect of the Cevennes—Their great interest.

THE great central plateau of France that serves as the watershed between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and severs France proper—the old medieval France—from Languedoc, is due to a mighty upheaval of granite, carrying with it aloft on its back beds of schist, Jura limestone, chalk, coal, and red sandstone. The granite has not everywhere reached the surface, it has not in all parts shaken off the burden that lay on it. The superincumbent beds do not lie in position one above another, like ranges of books on shelves. Many of them over a large tract have been carried away by denudation through the action of water.

The plateau under consideration stretches over an area of 3,000 square miles. It dies down towards the

north-west, but reaches its highest elevation in the east and in the south. This great upland district had to be crossed before the peoples dwelling north and south of it could be fused into one. The plateau extends through the old provinces of Marche and Limousin, Auvergne, Forez, the Velay, the Vivarais, Rouergue, and the Gevaudan. But it was disturbed, broken up, and overlaid by volcanic eruptions at a comparatively recent date, pouring forth floods of lava and clouds of ash in Auvergne, le Velay, and le Vivarais. In its upheaval, moreover, the granite turned up, snapped, and exposed the superposed beds, and left them as bristling ridges to the east and south. It is this fringe that constitutes the Cevennes. These describe a half-moon, with its convexity towards the basin of the Rhone. Locally, indeed, the name Cevennes is limited to a tangle of schist ridges and deep-cleft ravines, constituting that portion of the arc which is between the Coiron and the limestone plateau of Larzac. But such is not the original limitation. The Romans undoubtedly, looking from the basin of the Rhone on the long purple chain, behind which set the sun in a glow of amber, as they passed up and down between Arles and Vienne—designated that range Cebennæ, and geographers still are disposed to so name the entire series, as constituting an orological entity, although the several portions have received distinguishing appellations.

They all belong to the same system, were all in their main lines thrown up at the same time, though not by any means all of the same geological formation; and they are all peopled by the same race, all speaking the Langue d'Oc.





THE CYCLOPSES, MOURÈZE



It seems therefore reasonable to take the entire curve as forming the Cevennes from the depression of the Jarrêt, through which runs the line from Lyons to the coalfields of S. Etienne, as the northern limit, and the Montagne Noire, east of the gap of Revel, by which the road by which Castelnaudary and Castres are linked, as the western termination.

"The Cevennes," says Onésime Reclus, "have this striking feature, that they separate two climates, two vegetations, two natures. To the north and to the west are rain, snow, light fog silvered by the moon, and dense vapours which the sun cannot pierce; and the streams that water the smallest valleys nourish rich green meadows; to the south and east is a blazing sun, are glare, heat, drought, barrenness, dust, the vine, the olive, springs of water few and far between, but where they do issue, copious and clear; here—contrasts of colour, sharp-cut horizons, more beautiful than those of the north. What a contrast within a few leagues' distance between the verdure of Mezamet and the vari-coloured marbles of Cannes, between the Agout and the Salvetat d'Angles . . . between the valley of the Dourbie at Nant and the Hérault at Ganges, between the Tarn at Pont-de-Montvert and the embattled gorges of the Gardons, between the Allier at La Bastide and the ravines down which rushes the Cèze, between the young Loire and the terrible rapids of the Ardèche . . . on one side a French Siberia, on the other an Africa where the sirocco does not parch up the harvests, but where the mistral shrieks, itself producing a brief winter."<sup>1</sup>

The chain of the Cevennes, of which Mézenc may be regarded as the hinge, forms a ridge on the right bank of the Rhone, running for a while parallel to the French Alps upon the left bank. But whereas these latter

<sup>1</sup> *France: Algérie et Colonies*, Paris, Hachette et Cie.

turn and curve to the east, forming the Maritime Alps, the Cevennes have bent in exactly the opposite direction.

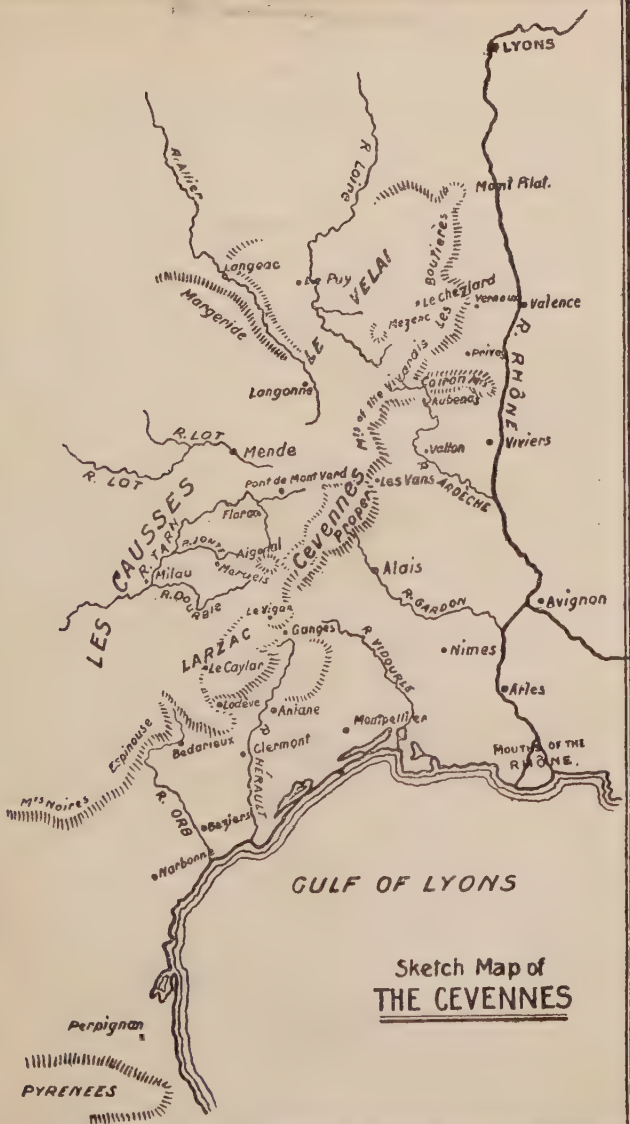
Geographically and historically the Cevennes divide into two great sections—the Cevennes Méridionales and the Cevennes Septentrionales. This continuous mountain ridge, in fact, forms a line of separation of waters very distinct, without solution of continuity, and which, in spite of the variety of its geological structure, has been determined by the same fold in the earth's crust, by one and the same act of pressure.

From the main chain, like the rib of a fern, extend lateral offshoots, between which are valleys watered by the drainage of the principal spinal chain. On the east side of the Cevennes these are all approximately at right angles to the axis. But this is not the case on the west side; nor is it so on the south. On this latter, before the main range a sort of outwork has been thrown up that deflects the streams, where they have not cut through it. These bastions are the Garrigues and the Espinouse.

The eastern face of the Cevennes towards the Rhone is torn and steep. That towards the west exhibits a different aspect altogether, as there the range starts out of a high uplifted plain but little eroded.

The Garrigues above mentioned form a barren, waterless bastion, with little growing on them but the dwarf Kirmes oak (*Quercus coccifera*) evergreen, with spiky leaves, locally called *garrus*, giving the name to the range. They are full of pot-holes (*avens*), down which the rain that falls sinks to travel underground and reappear often at great distances in copious springs.

The northernmost portion of the Cevennes is the



Cevennes →  
Welsh cefn (keven)  
= back or ridge



chain of the Boutières, composed of granite and gneiss, and they are the least interesting portion of the series. Few of the summits surpass 3,600 feet, but they throw out a spur that is a supreme effort, the Mont Pilat, 4,700 feet ; precisely as the Pyrenees, before expiring in the east, have projected to the north-east, and tossed aloft the noble pyramid of the Canigou. The Boutières attach themselves at their southern extremity to Mézenc, the loftiest peak of the Cevennes, 5,750 feet. So also does the chain of the Mégal, separated from the Boutières by the valley of the Lignon. Seen from Le Puy, this ridge is fine, broken into peaks. The Mégal itself attains to the height of 4,345 feet. This cone formerly belched forth a torrent of lava reaching to a thickness of 450 feet, and extending to a distance of fifty miles by eight miles wide.

From the volcanic nucleus of Mézenc branches south-east the chain of the Coiron, volcanic as well, stretching to the Rhone, where its last deposits of lava are crowned by the ruins of Rochemaure. The geologist Cordier, who had travelled in Auvergne, Italy, Syria, and Egypt, declared that he had never seen a volcanic region comparable to the Coiron. This chain is of special interest to the geologist, and is full of surprises to the ordinary traveller, for the lava bed caps the mountains, composed of friable limestone, that once formed a great calcareous plain. The Rhone has lowered its bed a thousand feet since the liquid stone flowed, and torrents have cut through lava and limestone, fashioning deep and even broad valleys. Next, the weather ate into the flanks where the stone was soft, undermined the basalt, that came down for lack of support in huge masses.



Not only so, but man from the remotest period has burrowed into the rock to form habitations for himself. Near S. Jean-le-Centenier are the Balmes de Montbrul, a volcanic crater 300 feet in diameter and 480 feet deep. Men have scooped out rudimentary dwelling places in the sides in fifteen to twenty stages, one above another; a chapel and a prison were among these excavations. A troglodyte family lived in one of these caves at the end of the eighteenth century.

The mountains of the Vivarais are the finest portion of the Cevennes, so noble are their outlines, so deep are the clefts that seam them, so tumbled is the aspect of range heaped on range; and they are supremely interesting on account of the volcanic vents that remain in good preservation, and the wondrous walls of prismatic basalt that line the rivers.

The Ardèche is certainly the most extraordinary river in Europe; after leaping, and burrowing, and sawing its way through basalt, it passes down a cleft of lias disposed in beds completely horizontal, and rising like the walls of houses. In fact, it traverses a long white street, many miles in length, and then enters the great ravine between lofty precipices of Dolomitic limestone, where runs no road, and where one must descend in a boat, shooting rapid after rapid in the midst of scenery only rivalled by the noted gorges of the Tarn.

It is not necessary to do more than indicate the general aspect of this portion of the Cevennes, to give an outline that may be filled in with details later on.

But before quitting this department, I must quote some words of Mr. Hammerton, no mean judge of landscape:—

“The department of Ardèche on the right bank of the



Rhone is but little visited by tourists, and does not contain a single mountain whose name is known in England. It is natural that the hills of the Ardèche should be little known, as the fame of them is extinguished by the Alps; yet they are highly picturesque and full of geological interest. As to the altitudes, they are not considered high mountains in France, but there are twelve of them that exceed Ben Nevis."

The volcanic region of Mézenc and the Coiron to the east of the granitic plateau separates the southern from the northern Cevennes. The first volcanic cones are met with immediately north of Mont Tanargue (4,785 feet). The southernmost is the Coupe de Jaujac. There are six of these volcanoes lying at the foot of the granite plateau, but they are insignificant in comparison with those of the principal range, which forms the watershed between the Loire and the Rhone, in the centre of which range is the three-toothed Mézenc, surrounded by subsidiary cones, among which is the Gerbier de Jonc (5,090 feet), which was 5,610 feet high before a landslide occurred in 1821, that reduced its height. On the flank of this mountain rises the Loire.

The department of Gard takes its name from several Gardons, a name as common in this part of the Cevennes as Gave is in the Pyrenees.

We are now in the midst of the Camisard country, an inextricable network of mountains of lacerated schist and of deeply furrowed valleys, in which the revolted Cevenols held at bay the armies of Louis XIV. At the present day the department of Gard contains more Protestants than any other in France, and whole villages are entirely Calvinist, with scarce a Catholic in them.

The Cevennes are drifting westward. In Hérault they take a definitely western direction. Here comes in the limestone plateau of Larzac, that feeds the countless flocks from which are derived Roquefort cheese. This is a barren land. It was not always so, but man has devastated it with the axe, and the sheep devour every plant that shoots, and kill the future of Larzac. Little soil now remains on this elevated white tableland; what there is is swept away by the rains and carried underground in the *avens* or pot-holes. M. Martel says:—

“Nowadays that atmospheric condensation is weak, the rains so soon as they touch the calcareous rock are engulfed in its thousands of fissures, at once, as if evaporated by contact with red-hot iron. The porosity of the soil is guilty of this legerdemain. Save on the morrow of great storms, drunk up thirstily by the parched *cause* in a few hours, there is not a drop of water on the plateau. In the stony bed of the torrents one may make almost a complete circuit of such a peninsula as that circumscribed by the Vis on the east, and the Virenque on the north, west, and south, where run their trenches, cut to the depth of 600 to 900 feet, forming tortuous chaplets of rubble beds, grey and sunburnt. Torrent beds these, sufficiently large to accommodate the Dordogne with ease, but now only rivers of ballast, where the flood of a passing storm rarely troubles the sleep of the sand and the solitary pebbles.”

The river Hérault, that gives its name to the department, flows through a ravine, up which runs no road, save to S. Guilhem-le-Désert. Another river not easy to be explored is its tributary, the Vis. One can look down into the cañon from above, but not thread it.

We come next to the coalfields that are more or less energetically exploited. Some talk has been about running a special line from them to Marseilles, so as to furnish the vessels with home-produced steam-coal. But the fuel here turned out has not the heating power of the anthracite of Cardiff, and it has proved cheaper to obtain a supply by water from Wales than to employ that which is dug out of the flanks of the Cevennes 150 miles distant.

The Espinouse gives birth on one slope to affluents of the Tarn, that discharges its waters into the Garonne and finally into the Atlantic. On the southern face, which is not a slope but a precipice, through chasms it sends feeders to the Orb that throws its waters into the Mediterranean. The Espinouse is composed of gneiss and schist, penetrated by veins of eruptive matter. Although the actual heights are not great, rarely exceeding 3,300 feet, yet the sheer cliffs, and the manner in which they have been cleft by torrents, gives them a grandeur which makes this portion of the Cevennes well deserving of a visit.

The Monts de Lacaune, almost wholly sterile, link the Cevennes of Hérault to those of Aveyron. The highest crest is the Pic de Montalet, 3,810 feet. They are composed of mica-schists, granite, and porphyry, and stretch in barren plateaux, or monotonous rolling ground, frozen for a great part of the year. The Montagne Noire, on the other hand, is well wooded. From its wretched hamlets come the men who help to gather in the vintage in the more fertile plains.

"These mountaineers arrive," says Mme. L. Figuiet, "to earn in one month enough to support them and their families all the rest of the year in their contracted valleys,

rich in vegetation but very poor in products. The Languedoc peasants treat them harshly. The unfortunate mountaineers, who ought to inspire compassion, are often enough badly treated, and serve as butts for chaff to the grape gatherers of the country to which they have come as assistants. The farmer who has hired a band of these *montagnards* gives them a granary and some hay in and on which to rest after the fatigues of the day. Here they are huddled together, men, women, and children, living on the grapes and on a coarse soup which they cook in common in the evening, and eat together out of one porringer. But these veritable pariahs are linked together by strong ties of affection. They rise, walk, work, eat, sleep together always in herds. In the evening, on returning from the vineyards, they dance their national *bourées*, not so much for enjoyment, as to bring back to their minds their native country, and sometimes great tears may be seen rolling down the cheeks of the young girls, who think of the happy times when they danced so merrily on the earthen floors of their cottages. The most fertile plains, the most brilliant cities, cannot compensate, to these poor people, for the century-old nut trees and the chestnuts which nourish them in their miserable hovels. Their hearts crave for the freshness of their valleys, the fragrance of their meadows, their snowy mountains, and the distaff over the fire of the winter's evenings."<sup>1</sup>

I have not in this book included the Montagne Noire. I have not described the range beyond the Espinouse westward, nor the mountains about Annonais and Mont Pilat, as these portions of the Cevennes are less interesting than that which intervenes, and, also, lest I should unduly extend the book.

It is strange that the region of the Cevennes should

<sup>1</sup> FIGUIER (L). *Nos de Lavène*, Paris, Marpon.

have been neglected by tourists to such an extent as it has ; but it is explicable.

Those who seek sunshine during the winter in the Riviera leave the Cevennes far away as a bank of cloud silver-fringed on their right hand beyond the Rhone. On their way back to England in spring they are disinclined to loiter, and break their home journey for the sake of excursions into this region, so little explored. In like manner, those who go to Pau are carried by the railway far away to the west, and see nothing of the plateau, because it slants downwards from the lofty ridge to the east.

Those who travel from Toulouse to Montpellier by the railway have their eyes attracted south to the snows and glaciers of the Pyrenees, and do not turn their heads to look north at the range that is so unassertive, sheltering itself behind the desolate Garrigues.

In 1894 I published a book, *The Deserts of Central France*, in which I described the great tableland high uplifted that lies in the penumbra of the great crescent, and I shall say nothing in this of the plateaux of Lot, Tarn, and Lozère, dealt with in the former work, but confine myself to the marginal range. Since M. Martel first drew attention to the gorges of the Tarn, and possibly due in a measure to my work, these gorges are becoming annually frequented more and more by tourists. However fine they may be, there are others in the departments of Ardèche, Gard, and Hérault, that fall but little, if at all, short of them in savagery and strangeness.

There are no great towns in the Cevennes. Such as there are are sleepy and stationary ; but from Béziers, Montpellier, Nîmes, Le Puy, where every comfort may be found, it is easy to run into the mountains, and

return from them to recruit. Hotels are vastly improved of late years owing to the insistence of the Touring Club on the sanitary arrangements being at least decent, which they were not ten years ago.

Enough has been said to show that the Cevennes abound in scenes of great beauty, and that they are of special interest to geologists. They are interesting in another way. The limestone hills are overgrown with aromatic herbs, mint, marjoram, thyme, sage, lavender, rosemary, so as to be veritable spice mountains over which the warm air wafts fragrance. The shrubs and trees present to our eyes, familiar with northern vegetation, an unfamiliar appearance. They are for the most part evergreens, where the chestnuts do not spread in forests, or the mulberry is not cultivated for silkworm culture.

For the geology of the volcanic district of Haute Loire and Ardèche, an excellent guide is Mr. Paulett Scrope's *Geology and Extinct Volcanoes in Central France*, London, second edition, 1858.

Lovers of the writings of Robert Louis Stevenson know his *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*—a delightful book, but dealing very little with the Cevennes proper, mainly with the Upper Gévaudan, and with that portion of Lozère threaded by the Tarn, and with neither of these do I deal in this volume.









LE SAC DE SARA



## CHAPTER II

### LE VELAY

Haute Loire—Geological structure of the plateau—Trap dykes—Volcanoes—Crater of Bar—The Lac de Bouchet—Legends—Offerings made to lakes—Mézenc—Direction of the rivers—Peculiarities in their course—How the basalt was broken through—The River Loire—The Borne—The Ceysac—Process of valley formation—The climate—Lacemaking—La Béate—The peasantry—Costume—History of Le Velay—The Polignacs—The Mint—The Revolution.

THE department of Haute Loire is made up mainly, but not wholly, of the ancient province of Le Velay. It is situated at the limit of the Langue d'Oc, on the confines of the region of the Langue d'Oil. Le Velay forms a rude triangle of which the bounds are the mountains of the Vivarais on the east, those of the Velay on the west, and the broad basis of the triangle is to the north towards Auvergne and Forez, fringed there by lower heights. It consists of an uplifted plateau with an average elevation above the sea of 2,700 feet, and is the least rainy portion of France. The summers there are never oppressively hot; but, on the other hand, in winter it is a Southern Siberia. Originally composed of granite, it has been pierced by volcanic cones, and covered with igneous dejections. As many as a hundred craters have been counted in it, and through the rents in the granite and schist opened during the throes of eruption, dykes of trap have been

thrust, forming spires and truncated columns. The heat of the molten matter so altered and disintegrated the rocks through which it was driven, that in many places these rocks have crumbled away, and have left the dykes erect in black nakedness high above the surrounding level. Such is the Aiguilhe by Le Puy, 210 feet high, to reach the summit of which a flight of steps has been hewn in the side, and on the top, in 962, Truan, Dean of Le Puy, erected a church in honour of S. Michael, and called it Seguret, The Secure Refuge; the church was consecrated in 980. Another of these obelisks is at Fay le Froid, another basaltic monolith is La Roche Rouge on the banks of the Gagne.

But sometimes the eruptive dykes are more massive, and form stone tables with precipitous sides, as at Polignac, the cradle of an illustrious family, and at Arlempdes on the Loire.

There are few crags of basalt or tufa in the Velay that are not crowned by a ruined castle, and to enumerate these would be a tedious and unprofitable task.

The last of all the volcanoes to explode was the Denise, near Le Puy, and that erupted when man was on the earth, for under the lava, in a bed of breccia or volcanic ash, was found in 1884 the skeleton of a man; another was discovered shortly after, and a third is reported to have been recently disinterred. In the case of the first of these, the man seems to have been overtaken by the shower of falling ash, to have sat down, placed his head between his knees, and held his hands over his skull to protect it, and so perished, and the rain of cinders finally enveloped and buried him. No weapons or ornaments have been found with these

bodies. The relics of plants and animals in the same bed belong to species still existing in the neighbourhood.

Of the craters the most perfect is that of Bar, thus described by Georges Sand :—

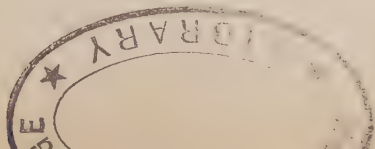
“This ancient volcano rises isolated above a vast plateau that is as bare as it is sad. It stands there as if planted as a boundary mark between the old Velay and Auvergne. From the summit of its truncated cone a superb view is obtained extending to the Cevennes. A vast forest of beech crowns the mountain and clothes its sides, which are much rifted towards the base. The crater is a mighty bowl full of verdure, perfectly circular, and with the bottom covered with a turfy sward in which grow pale birch trees thinly scattered. Here was at one time a lake, dried up in the times of Roman occupation. The tradition of the country is strange. It was said that this tarn bred storms; and the inhabitants of Forez accordingly came hither, sword in hand, and forcibly drained it.”<sup>1</sup>

The Lac de Bouchet is not a sheet of water filling an ancient crater, but occupies a hollow produced by the bursting of a great bubble of air in the molten lava. It is almost circular, and the ground around it is very slightly raised. Curiously enough, Roman substructures have been traced in the lake. Probably some Gallo-Roman noble had his summer villa there, overhanging the water, as at Baiæ.

“Nullus in orbe sinus Baiis præluget amœnis,  
Si dixit dives—lacus et mare sentit amorem  
Festinantis heri.”

This originated a tale told by the peasantry to the

<sup>1</sup> *Jean de la Roche*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy.



effect that a city lay submerged under the crystal water. The story is this: Our Lord visited Le Velay to see what way the Gospel was making there. He lodged with an aged widow, who nourished herself on the milk of a single goat. The people received Christ badly, and pelted Him with stones. Then He laid hold of the widow by the hand and drew her away; and she, leading the goat, followed. They had not proceeded far before she turned and looked back. And lo! where the town had been was now a lake. Three stones mark the spot where the widow took up her final residence, and on one of these she is said to have sat to milk her goat. The same story is told of another of these lakes, that of Arconne, near Fay le Froid, and there also are found three blocks ranged in a line.

That these lakes were held sacred admits of no dispute.

Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, says that in the land of the Gabali (the adjoining Gevaudan) was a Mount Helanus, where was a lake. Every year the inhabitants of the country flocked thither and cast oblations into the water—linen, weaving-materials, cheese, wax, bread, and coins. They arrived in wagons, bringing their food with them, and feasted by the lakeside during three days. On the last day a storm of thunder, lightning, and hail was wont to break over the sheet of water. This usage lasted till a bishop of Clermont went thither, and preached to the people; but as he found it impossible to dissuade the natives from the practice, he built there a chapel to S. Hilary, and exhorted them to leave their gifts there instead of throwing them into the tarn. This lake is now called Lac S. Andéol, on the mountains of Aubrac, and

the ruined chapel of S. Hilary remains. The people still reverence the pool, which they call the Father of Hail Storms, and till last century continued to cast offerings into the water. The visible result of the efforts of the good bishop so many centuries ago was no more than the construction of a chapel now in ruins.

It is probable enough that were the Lac de Bouchet drained, it would yield a rich spoil of coins. The lake is 2,800 feet across and 98 feet deep. In the morass occupying the bowl of Bar have been found a great many early coins, a necklace, and bracelets of bronze.

The loftiest of the Cevennes is Mézenc, on the frontier of Haute Loire. It is 5,750 feet high, and was at one time the central point of violent Plutonic eruptions. Several craters poured forth trachyte, phonolith, and basalt, which overflowed the granite, gneiss, clay deposits, and limestone to a great distance.

One of the craters, La Croix-des-Boutières, remains very distinct.

"The phonolith of which Mézenc is composed," says Elisée Reclus, "appears to have issued from the crater in a state of high fluidity, and to have spread very rapidly over the slopes of the crystalline plateau. The result is that the volcanic cones have, relatively to the anterior formations that support them, but a feeble elevation. The lavas which issued from the crater of Mézenc, of very unequal texture, have been attacked by storms, so as to represent a range of distinct cones on which grow forests of oak and pine."

If the map be studied, it will be seen that there are two features in the water system of this region that merit notice.

In the first place, we have the Allier on the west, and

the Loire in the midst of this tableland flowing due north to shed their waters ultimately into the Atlantic. Parallel with them, divided from the Loire only by the chain just described, distant from it from forty to fifty miles, is the Rhone, running in a precisely opposite direction, due south, to discharge into the Mediterranean.

Then, again, going west, we have the Lot, the Tarn, the Jonte, the Truyère, and the Dordogne, all in their early youth streaming from east to west, their sources, or those of some of them, twenty miles from the Allier, which is racing as hard as it can run to the north. The explanation of this last feature is easy. When the granite was upheaved it lifted a crust of Dolomite on its back like a huge shell, and in lifting split the shell in many places.

The rivers, rising in the granite of the Margeride, the Mont d'Aubrac, the Aigoual, the Monts de Lozère, and slipping off their impervious sides looking for outlets, found these fissures, took possession of them, and rushed down them on their way to the plains in the west.

The average depth of these chasms is from 1,300 to 1,500 feet, and their width at the bottom varies from 160 to 1,500 feet. Their rocky walls are carved by rain and frost into the most fantastic forms. At one time I held, with M. Martel, that these cañons were originally subterranean watercourses, and that the caverns formed by the underground waters became open valleys by the falling in of their roofs. But this idea is untenable, as I now see. The rivers descending from the granitic range must have found a passage, and they found it in the already cleft masses of the Causses. They rise out-



side the limestone area, and cut right through it, separating one Causse from another.<sup>1</sup>

A second feature in the river system of Haute Loire is that a certain number of the affluents of the Loire run into it from the direction in which it is flowing, and their mouths are more or less against the stream they are about to feed. A river usually affects the form of a deciduous tree, of which the branches represent the tributaries. The branches are attached to the trunk at an obtuse angle, as seen from below. With pines it is different; with them the limbs are attached in the reverse fashion, at an acute angle as seen from below. Some of the affluents of the Loire come into it in the way in which a fir branch grows out of the main trunk. This is notably the case with the Arzon and the Borne. The reason for this is that the basin of Le Velay has a rim to the north, and the drainage from the north naturally runs down to the lowest point in the basin. But on reaching this spot the streams come on the Loire, which has cut for itself a huge gap through the northern lip of the bowl, and is able to discharge its waters through that.

How this was done demands some explanation. The Rhone is the mightiest of the rivers of France, but its sources are in the Swiss Alps, and it does not enter France till after it has passed through the Lake of Geneva. But the Loire is next in size and importance, and it flows through French soil only. The source is under the Gerbier de Jonc, in the department of Ardèche, but flows in it for a short course only. It is still a feeble stream when it enters the department of

<sup>1</sup> See "The Cañons of Southern France," by A. T. Jukes-Browne, in *Natural Science*, vol. vi., 1895.

Haute Loire, through which it makes its way till it leaves it for Forez. The Loire rises 4,500 feet above the sea, and when it quits the department it has fallen to 1,450 feet. When the volcanoes of Le Velay were in eruption and the tableland was overflowed with molten lava, the Loire must have been arrested and have mounted to heaven in a column of steam. In time the lava cooled, and the stream groped for beds of scoria and fallen dust through which it could nibble its way with ease. But when it encountered a barrier of basalt the case was altered. This blocked its course as with rows of iron piles rammed into the ground and running far back. But the crystallisation of the lava into basaltic prisms helped the river to break through.

The molten matter, of the consistency of treacle, flowing over the country followed its undulations, filling hollows here and rounding obstructions there. When it cooled it began to crystallise, and form hexagonal columns that are upright. But when the surface of the original soil would not allow of regular crystallisation, there the columns shaped themselves in all directions and in great confusion; the result being that in many places the basalt was fractured, fissured, and ruinous from the very first. The water speedily detected these weak points, worked at them, tumbled the columns down, overleaped them, bored further, and did not rest till it had cut its way completely through the barrier.

Hercules in his cradle strangled a couple of serpents, and the infant Loire, a ridiculously small stream for the work it effected, on entering the department laid hold of and split the bed of Plutonic deposit, and held on its way between basaltic escarpments. It is, however, below Le Puy, after the Sumène has entered it, under







CASCADE DES ESTREYS





CASTLE OF LA VOUTE-SUR-LOIRE

the mighty rocks of Peyredeyre that begin its finest achievements. The eruptions that took place in this part were later than those which had obstructed it in its infancy. They entirely blocked the exit, and the Loire was dammed back in the basin of Le Puy, where it spread into an extensive lake. In time, however, it succeeded in sawing a way through. The railway from Le Puy to St. Etienne runs through the furrow that it formed. The barrier had been thrown up from both sides by the meeting and overlapping of lava floods from the volcanoes of Velay in the west, and those of the Vivarais in the east, and the beds were piled one upon another. It is marvellous to see the passage which the river forced for itself through these superincumbent beds, from Peyredeyre to La Voute. The rock at this latter place sustains a restored castle belonging to the Duke of Polignac.

Below this point the gorge ceases for a while, till another barricade was reached below Vorey, where the Arzon enters the Loire.

There the river struggles between the Miaune and the Gerbizon, in the defiles of Chambon and Chamalières. The beds of phonolith of these mountains, which formerly corresponded unbrokenly, are now separated by a gash 1,500 feet deep, which the waters of the Loire have achieved, cutting through the lava to the granite beneath.

The Borne, on which is Le Puy, also traverses gorges, notably that of Estreys, and passes the well-preserved castle of the Leaguer Baron de S. Vidal. Then it sweeps under the pillared rocks of Espaly and slides beneath l'Aiguilhe. Perhaps as interesting an example as any of the way in which an insignificant stream has

overmastered all difficulties may be seen in the Valley of Ceyssac. The rill flows into the Borne at an acute angle against the current. The valley was choked with a mass of tufa ejected from La Denise, and the current was arrested in its downward course. The stream then formed a lake that rose till it overflowed the dam in two places, leaving between them a prong of somewhat harder rock. When the water had poured for a considerable time over the left-hand lip, and it had worn this down to the depth of about seventy feet, it all at once abandoned this mode of outlet and concentrated its efforts on the right-hand portion of the barrier, where it found that the tufa was less compact, and it sawed this down till it reached its present level, leaving the prong of rock in the middle rising precipitously out of the valley with the water flowing below it, but attached to the mountain-side by the neck it had abandoned. The Polignacs seized on the fang of tufa and built a castle on the top, only to be reached by steps cut in the face of the rock; and the villagers covered the neck with their houses. They then proceeded to scoop out a great vault in the body of the living rock, blocked the entrance with a wall in which is inserted a pretty Romanesque doorway, and so provided themselves with a parish church at very little expense. On a saddle overhead they constructed a belfry for three bells.

In no part of Europe can be studied with greater facility the process of valley formation, for here that process is comparatively recent. That which has been accomplished elsewhere in hundreds of thousands of years, has here been achieved in thousands only. The great elevation of the valley, and the fact that it lies open to the north cause it to be a cold country. The





A LACEMAKER, LE PUY





high tableland is swept by the winds, of which the most dreaded is that of the south, *le vent blanc*, bringing with it tempest that devastates the harvest.

"In these quasi-Alpine regions," says M. Malegue, "snow, scourged by the blasts, flies in clouds, heaps itself up in drifts, encumbers the roads that have to be marked out with poles to guide the traveller, buries the cottages of the poor mountaineers, holding them prisoners for months at a time in their dwellings, and by its long stay, as by the intensity of the cold, makes administrative and commercial relations often impossible and sometimes perilous."

To this fact is due the creation of the great industry of the land—lacemaking.

In feudal times Le Velay was a small province inaccessible for half the year, obliged accordingly to depend on itself for its existence. Auvergne, Forez, the Vivarais circumscribed it ; these were rich provinces. Moreover, the Velaviens had to pay tax and tithe and toll to the barons, the clergy, the king. Such burdens might be borne elsewhere with a grumble, but here they ate into the sinews of life, unless the culture of the soil were supplemented from some other source. And it was precisely this that created the industry of Le Velay—lacemaking.

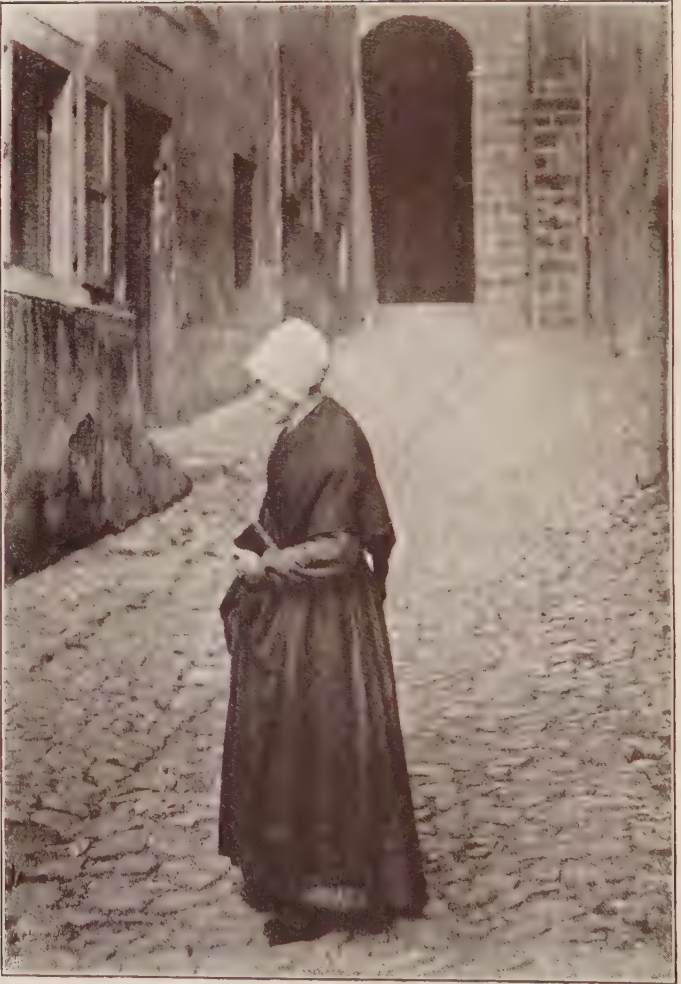
So soon as the first snows appeared, the men abandoned their farms and cottages, and went, some to Le Puy, where they occupied an entire quarter, and gained their livelihood as tapsters, farriers, weavers, carpenters, pin-makers, etc., or else departed for Lyons, Nîmes Montpellier, and Toulouse, to work as masons. All the women of the country pressed into Le Puy. There they formed congregations under the name and patron-

age of some saint. Each of these congregations had its hall, and in this gathered the wives and daughters of the absent men, and spent their days and evenings in making pillow-lace, in singing, telling tales, and in gossip. There they remained working at their little squares with flying bobbins, till the spring sun brought back fathers and husbands and brothers, when the women put aside their bobbins and returned to their several farms.

Lacemaking was a flourishing business till the year 1547, when a sumptuary law was promulgated by the Parliament of Toulouse and sanctioned by the King, forbidding the wearing of lace by any save nobles, for the odd reason that there was no means of obtaining domestic servants in Le Velay, as every girl was a lace-maker.

Great consternation was caused by this edict. That same year a late frost smote the vines, corn was dear, and a pestilence broke out. In the midst of this discontent, Huguenot preachers appeared in the land, and they did their utmost to direct the disaffection of the people against the Church. Happily, S. Francis Regis arrived in Le Velay on a preaching mission, and speedily saw that the limitations imposed on the production of lace was the real grievance angering the people and inducing them to hit out blindly at all authority. He hurried to Toulouse and obtained the withdrawal of the law. He did more: his brethren of the Jesuit Order, incited by him, spread abroad the passion for lace in the New World, became in fact *commis voyageurs* for the industry, and thus opened out fresh fields for the produce. It is due to this that the memory of S. Francis Regis is still fragrant in the





LA BÉATE

land, and that his figure so often adorns the pillows on which the lace is made, and that his tomb at Lalouvesc, where he died on December 31st, 1640, receives such streams of pilgrims.

The paralysis of the industry had hit more than the women of Le Velay. It had affected the colporteurs who brought to the market of Le Puy the linen thread out of which the lace was made. It is remarkable that at a time when roads were execrable, and means of communication faulty, the lacemakers were dependent on Holland for the material with which they worked. The linen of the district was too coarse to serve, and all that was used by them was derived from the Low Countries.

Lacemaking continues to be the main industry of the country. In fact, Haute Loire is the most important centre in the world. In the report on the lace at the Exhibition at Chicago, it is stated that the number of women there engaged on this dainty and beautiful art was 92,000, whereas in Belgium but 65,000 are thus employed.

In the most remote hamlets, in the most solitary cottages among the mountains, the societies of lace workers still gather, in summer before their doors, in winter in the cottage of *la béate*. The house of this woman is surmounted by a little bell-cott. One such is to be found in the smallest cluster of cottages. The house consists uniformly, on the ground floor, of one large room that serves as chapel, refuge, school, and place of assembly. In the upper story lives *la Béate*. This woman, whose official title is *Dame de l'Instruction*, fulfils many duties. In a land where the children are occupied in the fields throughout the summer, they can attend school only in winter, precisely when communica-

tions are difficult and are often impossible. It is then that they flock to the house of the Béate, who gives them the first elements of instruction. She also teaches the young girls how to use the bobbins. During the summer she has a crèche, and attends to the infants whilst their mothers are in the fields; she nurses the sick, lays out the dead, and exerts her influence, which is second only to that of the curé, to counsel those who are in perplexity, to console the sorrowful, and to reconcile those who have quarrelled. She is the peacemaker in every little agglomeration of cottages. As a return for her services she obtains her lodging gratis, corn and wood sufficient for her needs. Every well-to-do peasant also contributes fifty centimes per month for her maintenance. In her house in the winter evenings the women gather to work together, and each meeting is begun and concluded with prayer. How valuable are the services of these women may be judged by the fact that in Haute Loire there are 265 parishes, but made up of 3,300 widely-scattered hamlets.

The peasant of the uplands of Le Velay and Le Vivarais is of medium height, is strongly built, and of a vigorous constitution. Accustomed from childhood to follow his sheep and oxen in their leisurely movements, he also becomes a being of slow habit of body and even slower of mind. He is shy, timorous, and cautious of compromising himself in any way with his neighbours, above all with the officials.

A writer in 1829 says :—

“His broad-brimmed hat shades a face that when calm seems to be incapable of expression. Chestnut hair flows over his shoulders. His eye is calm and assured. In speech he is curt, to the point; but he is often figurative in his expressions.







CEVENOL PEASANT

He makes no distinction in his address to any one to whatever rank he may belong, and however wealthy he may be. Communicative when on terms of familiarity with him, an expression of goodwill steals out on and overspreads his usually rugged and harsh features, like the flowers that open on the face of a rock. But should one inadvertently offend his pride, at once wrath, prompt and fierce, flames forth, an oath breaks from his lips, and in a moment the weapon, hidden but never quitted, is drawn and raised, and often blood flows to efface a quite trivial offence."

Descriptions of character of a people are never satisfactory. I shall give in a subsequent chapter the story of the Tavern of Peyrabeille, that shows what the character of this people is in a way unmistakable.

Robert Louis Stevenson's account of the people of Le Velay is peculiarly unpleasant. He speaks of their discourtesy, and accentuates their brutality of manner and speech. I venture, with all due deference, to differ from him. The peasant in Languedoc is much towards you as you are to him. If you meet him with courtesy and kindness it is cordially reciprocated, and my experience is altogether the reverse of his. I do not think that R. L. Stevenson treated the French peasant quite as he expects to be treated. Here is one instance :—

"At the bridge of Langogne a lassie of some seven or eight addressed me in the sacramental phrase, 'D'où 'st que vous venez?' She did it with so high an air that she set me laughing; and this cut her to the quick. She was evidently one who reckoned on respect, and stood looking after me in silent dudgeon as I crossed the bridge."

But I will quote again, and this time from Georges Sand :—

“I find here a race very marked in its characteristics, altogether in harmony with the soil that supports it ; meagre, gloomy, rough, and angular in its forms and in its instincts. At the tavern every one has his knife in his belt, and he drives the point into the lower face of the table, between his legs ; after that they talk, they drink, they contradict one another, they become excited, and they fight. The houses are of an incredible dirtiness. The ceiling, made up of a number of strips of wood, serves as a receptacle for all their food and for all their rags. Alongside with their faults I cannot but recognise some great qualities. They are honest and proud. There is nothing servile in the manner in which they receive you, with an air of frankness and genuine hospitality. In their innermost soul they partake of the beauties and the asperities of their climate and their soil. The women have all an air of cordiality and daring. I hold them to be good at heart, but violent in character. They do not lack beauty so much as charm. Their heads capped with a little hat of black felt, decked out with jet and feathers, give to them, when young, a certain fascination, and in old age a look of dignified austerity. But it is all too masculine, and the lack of cleanliness makes their toilette disagreeable. It is an exhibition of discoloured rags above legs long and stained with mud, that makes one totally disregard their jewellery of gold and even the rock crystals about their necks.”

The elder women alone preserve a distinctive costume, and that is confined to the head-dress. Its main feature consists in a white frilled cap with a highly coloured broad ribbon forming a bow in front ; the ends are carried back over the ears, and a little peculiarly shaped black felt hat, fit only for a child, is perched on the

front of the head. It is not becoming, therefore the young women will have none of it. But in flying the smoke they fall into the smother, for in place of this they adopt the most tawdry modern hats, a congeries of feathers and cheap sham flowers.

The history of Le Velay is involved in that of the bishops of Le Puy, who were counts under the sovereignty of the King of France. They were either under the domination of the Polignacs, or were fighting with them over the rights to coin money. This right had been conceded to the bishops in 924. But the viscounts of Polignac also had their mint, and neither could debase his coinage lest his rival should obtain a predominant circulation for his currency. In the twelfth century Pons de Polignac fought the bishop on this question. Louis VII. had to intervene. He carried off the viscount and his son Heracleus prisoners to Paris, and the strife was only concluded four years later, in 1173, by a compact, by virtue of which the bishop and the viscount were to share equally the profits of a mint held in common.

The Polignacs were a thorn in the side of the Bishop and Chapter of Le Puy. Sometimes by menace with the sword they determined the elections to the see, and when it suited them they appointed one of the family to the throne. At the close of the eleventh century, one of these Polignac prelates, Stephen Taillefer, surnamed "The Ravager," brought down on his head the anathema of Pope Gregory VII. He had been Bishop of Clermont, but in 1073, when the see of Le Puy was vacant, transferred himself to it as the wealthier of the two. Another Stephen had been elected by the Chapter, and there was fighting in the streets.

Taillefer summoned his kinsman of Polignac to his aid, and drove the rival candidate out of the city. But as the canonicity of his election was disputed, he deemed it advisable to visit Rome with a valise stuffed with gold, and establish his claim by the most cogent of all arguments. He persuaded the Pope to consent to his retaining the see, but the case was so gross, and his hands were so steeped in blood, that Gregory imposed the condition that he should not exercise episcopal functions, which were to be delegated to a suffragan, and that he should revisit Rome with another load of gold somewhat later. This was in 1074, but in 1076 the Pope excommunicated him because he had not fulfilled his promise of again visiting Rome. Gregory was in the midst of his strife with the Emperor Henry IV., whom he deposed in that year, and he was sorely in need of money wherewith to support William of Utrecht, whom he had set up in opposition.

It is remarkable how sensitive Rome was to simony when practised anywhere else save in Rome itself.

At a council held at Clermont in 1077, Stephen was deposed by order of Gregory. Nevertheless, he managed to retain the see till 1078.

After a while open oppression of the Church by the Polignacs came to an end ; cadets of the family quietly appropriated to themselves the canonries and best benefices ; and the last bishop of the name, William de Chalençon, has left a memory that was even savoury.

But if the Polignacs were meddlesome neighbours of the see, they lent lustre to Le Velay. These masters of the rock, were brave nobles. They fought in the Crusades ; they fought the English. They espoused the faith, the passions, the fervour of their native land. In

every generation illustrious marriages added to the splendour of their escutcheon. As the feudal towers of Polignac dominated, and dominate still, the green and flowery land that lies spread below it, so does the name of Polignac dominate the history of Velay. The race was one that abounded in energy, was robust and patriotic.

Velay was ravaged by the Free Companies, and summoned Du Guesclin to its aid against them. Of its troubles in the Wars of Religion I shall have to speak in the next chapter. Le Puy was occupied by the Leaguers, who made themselves masters of nearly every stronghold in Velay, and it was not till some years after Henry IV. had come to the throne that it submitted to his authority.

The Revolution brought the same results in Velay as elsewhere; the cathedral of Le Puy was pillaged, the monasteries destroyed, and a certain amount of blood was shed; sixty priests were hung or shot, and many nobles guillotined. Since then it has enjoyed tranquillity, only recently ruffled by the taking of the Inventories, leading to the breaking open of the church doors.





## CHAPTER III

### LE PUY

The basin of Le Puy—Situation of the city—Mont Anis and l'Aiguilhe—How to reach Le Puy—The Velauni—Their capital—Transferred—The feverstone—Temple of Adido—Monument of Scutarius—Baptistery—The Black Virgin—The cathedral—Murder of a chorister by Jews—Western entrance and façade—Cloister—Vaulting of nave—Tower—Lay canonry—Paintings—Walls—Old houses—S. Michel de l'Aiguilhe—How did the builders work?—S. Laurent—Du Guesclin—The Bible of Theodulf—Wealth of the see—Bad bishops—Bertrand de Chalençon—William de la Roue—Revolt of the people—Murder of the bailiff—The White Hoods—Antoine de S. Nectaire—His sister—Massacre ordered—The bishop at Fay-le-Froid—Espaly—Vidal Guyard—Capture of castle—Defence of Le Puy—Church militant—The old gunner—Christopher d'Allegre—The Huguenots retire—The Revolution.

**A**SSUREDLY no city in Europe occupies a site so fantastic as does the capital of the Velay. The high wind-and-snow-swept tableland to south and west falls away and forms a pleasant basin covered with vineyards and sprinkled over with white villas or summer-houses of the citizens, as if there had been a giant's wedding and much rice had been thrown.

The Borne, that has hitherto struggled through ravines and tumbled in cascades, here ceases to be boisterous, and puts on an air of placidity as it glides past the cathedral city.

In this basin the climate is mild compared with that of the uplands, and the soil is fertile. The train from



WEST FRONT OF CATHEDRAL, LE PUY



Arvant curves round the town before it settles into the station, much as a dog turns about before he lies down to snooze.

What at once arrests the eye on approaching Le Puy is that out of the very midst of the basin up start two rocks ; the largest is Mont Anis, and about this, up its steep sides, the town scrambles. On a ledge above all the houses is the cathedral, and soaring above that again is the rock of Corneille, crowned by a colossal statue of the Virgin fifty-two feet high, and the largest in the world. It is run out of two hundred Russian cannons taken at Sebastopol, and stands on a pedestal of twenty feet. It is a disfigurement to the town, for it dwarfs the venerable cathedral. The site was formerly occupied by a ruined tower.

The other rock is the Aiguilhe, the Needle, on the summit of which stands the church of S. Michel, reached by 265 steps cut in the face of the rock.

The town is composed of houses grappling to every ledge; the streets are stone stairs, and the *place* is staged on steps. When to this is added that the cathedral is unique in its way, a marvel of Romanesque architecture, treated in original fashion, then it will be conceived that Le Puy is an attractive place to visit.

But when we come to consider how it may be reached we are beset with difficulties. The direct line from Paris is undoubtedly that leading to Vichy, but the trains from Vichy onward do not correspond, and are moreover omnibus trains that loiter for six hours and a half over seventy-four miles.

Nor can we reach Le Puy by the main line from Paris to Nîmes in a day, for at the junction, S. George's d'Aubrac, the trains do not communicate, and there is

no tolerable inn at this junction where one can spend the night.

The third way is by Lyons and S. Etienne, and this is by far the best, for by it the whole journey can be effected in a day; but for that one must travel by express first-class as far as Lyons.

The people anciently occupying Le Velay were the Velauni, and they had their capital at Rheusio, so called from *rhew*, the Celtic for cold; and that was at S. Paulien. There also was the first seat of a bishop, but S. Evodius (351-374), whose name has been corrupted into Vosy, transferred his throne to Le Puy, then called Anisium. It is supposed that a dolmen stood on the platform now occupied by the cathedral, and that a large slab of trachyte laid down in the porch, its blue colour distinguishing it from the rest, was the capstone. This slab is called the Feverstone, and those with fire in their blood were wont to sleep a night upon it. The earliest mention of a cure performed by this means is in the time of S. Vosy. To the dolmen, if it ever existed, succeeded a Gallo-Roman temple dedicated to a local deity, Adido, conjointly with Augustus.

When Scutarius, the second bishop of Le Puy, was buried, a monument was erected over him. To save the trouble of shaping a stone for the purpose, the mason of that day took a slab on which was an inscription, "Adidoni et Augusto Sex. Tolonius musicus D. S. P.," turned this about and carved on the other side a monogram of Christ, and under that "Scutari Papa vive Deo." The form of the letters, the title of Pope applied to the bishop, not yet restricted to the pontiff at Rome, and the expression of hope so like those found in the Catacombs, speak for the antiquity of this inscription. But it was

not allowed to remain where placed ; when the present cathedral was built, this stone was employed as lintel to one of the north doorways.

The oldest building in Le Puy is the baptistery of S. John, near to the cathedral. It was much altered in the Middle Ages, but is still an interesting relic of the fourth century. From it was removed the white marble sarcophagus of the fifth century, now in the museum of the town, on which are figured the cure of the paralytic, the cursing of the barren fig tree, and other scriptural themes.

This baptistery was in use till 1791, as the exclusive place where children of Le Puy could be christened. In this Le Puy resembled Florence, Pisa, and other North Italian towns, where baptism was a sacrament reserved for administration at the Mother Church.

The fame acquired by Le Puy as the chief seat of the worship of the Virgin dates from an early but unknown period. Charlemagne in 803 founded ten poor canonries *la pauperad* in connection with the church ; but the great prosperity of the church as an attractive point for pilgrims is due to a black image said to have been brought from the East by Louis IX. But as it happens, the Eastern Church does not tolerate carved images, and contents herself with paintings of sacred subjects. Le Puy was, however, an objective of pilgrimage long before that, for in 1062, Bernard, Count of Bigorre, went thither, and in a fit of devotion vowed himself and his county to Our Lady of Le Puy, and undertook to pay to this church annually a considerable sum of money.

High above the altar is now set up what looks like an Aunt Sally at a fair. It has a black head, from which the garments are spread out like the feathers of a



shuttlecock. But this is not the original doll, for that was burned at the Revolution. One might have supposed, perhaps expected, that the clergy on returning to the church would have rejoiced to be rid of such an object of degrading superstition. But not so, they had another black virgin made by a joiner, and dressed it in frills and furbelows, and set it up to receive the adoration of the ignorant and the stupid. One thing they did change; the new doll was made a little less grotesque and uncouth than was the first, of which representations remain.

The original image was of cedar wood, swathed about with bands of papyrus glued to it and partly inscribed. Upon this the features of the face, of negro tint, the flesh of hands and feet and the draperies were painted in distemper, in an archaic style. One story relative to it was that it came from Mount Carmel, and had been carved by the prophet Jeremiah in prophetic ecstasy. What seems most probable is that it was an Egyptian idol representing Isis and the infant Horus. S. Louis may have found this on his crusade to Egypt, and have frankly believed that it was a representation of the Virgin and Child, and so have presented it to the church of Le Puy. It certainly had a suspiciously Egyptian appearance.

Devotion to the original image brought kings and nobles to it, and made them open their purses and pour forth gold, and sign charters delivering over to bishop and chapter vast estates and privileges. The church became extremely wealthy, and it was owing to its wealth that the glorious cathedral was built. The basilica is approached from the west by the Rue des Tables, so named on account of the stalls set out there at the



time of the great pilgrimages. At the foot of the ascent is a fountain erected in commemoration of a choirboy, supposed to have been murdered by the Jews in 1320 and thrown into a well. He was given up as lost, when on Palm Sunday he reappeared, took his place in the procession, and told how he had been slaughtered, and how, by the intervention of Our Lady, he had been resuscitated. The mob believed the story, burst into the Jew's house, tore him to pieces, and cast his dismembered limbs to be devoured by dogs.

If they had but looked closer into the matter, they would have discovered that the urchin had been playing truant, and disguised his idleness by a lie.

From the Rue des Tables the remarkable west front of the minster may be seen in full. It is Romanesque in style, of the Auvergnat character, the façade is enriched with stones white and red and black, arranged in alternating bands, in lozenges and in lattice work. The zebra-like appearance is not pleasing. The eye desires repose, and is teased with the intricacy of the pattern.

This western façade is actually the frontispiece of a vast porch or narthex that stretches back through four of the bays of the nave, with flights of steps, eleven in each, and with landings between. Half-way up the porch are two chapels, one on each side, with large oak doors carved and painted. They represent groups of figures from the story of the Gospel. The background is sunk, but the surface left smooth, and is painted. The chapel on the right is dedicated to S. Stephen, that on the left to S. Giles. Neither is now used.

On two of the steps of the ascent is inscribed in Latin, "*Ni caveas crimen, caveas contingere limen,*

Nam Regina poli vult sine sorde coli." "Unless free from guilt shun this threshold, for the Queen of Heaven will be worshipped only by a guiltless soul."

Formerly at the head of the fourth landing was a central doorway leading into the nave by another flight of steps continued inside the church; and it was said of Notre Dame du Puy, that you went in at the navel and came out at the ears, *i.e.* at the lateral doors in the transepts. But the central entrance has been walled up, and a floor been laid over these steps. Access is now obtained to the nave by a side flight that turns round the church and gives admission in the south transept. The corresponding lateral flight gives access to the magnificent cloister, partially closed by a gate of intricate and beautiful ironwork. The arcade in the cloister rests on twin columns with richly carved capitals, no two alike, and the wall space above the arcade is filled in with mosaic work of red, yellow, white, and black.

The interior of the church is not less remarkable than the exterior. Originally it consisted of a small square basilica, now forming the retro-choir; this was prolonged into nave with aisles, and transepts were added forming a Greek cross, with a dome at the intersection. Later on the church was carried further westward, and the singular western portion, a nave over a porch, was raised in the twelfth century.

Each bay of the nave is surmounted by an octagonal cupola. Two sides contain windows looking north and south. Two sides have also windows sustained on an arch flung across the nave, and looking into it. The four other sides of the octagons are in the depth of the wall. The lateral south porch, opening on to the little Place du For, where is the episcopal palace, is a noble



PORCH, CATHEDRAL, LE PUY



piece of work. Two bold arches give access to it. To the left is a doorway only opened for a pope to pass through; the other gives admission to ordinary personages into the transept.

The tower is a campanile detached from the church, unbuttressed, and though fine, is too small for the size of the minster. But this is due to the fact that every inch of space on the rock was precious, and had to be economised. Accordingly a tower of greater bulk at base would have encroached on the way of access to the basilica. There are two more doorways, one, further on, a bold and daring sweep that spans not the entrance only, but also the little street. A third is on the north side.

Until this year, 1906, the head of the French State, King, Emperor or President was *ex officio* lay canon of Le Puy, just as our King is a lay canon of S. David's. But with the separation of Church and State in France, this has ceased, and M. Loubet was the last of the lay canons of Le Puy.

At one time there existed a promising school of painting in Le Velay, but it was killed by the troubles of the Wars of Religion. The frescoes in the cathedral and in some of the churches exhibit great merit. Such as remain, unfortunately very few, may be best studied in the Museum, where are accurate copies.

The finest of all represents the liberal arts, and was discovered by Mérimée in the capitular hall of the cathedral, in 1856. It is of the fifteenth century, and is conjectured, but on insufficient grounds, to have been the work of Jean Perréal, painter to Kings Charles IX. and Francis I. In the Museum may be seen reproductions of some paintings from Langeac, in which the

figures are in gold on a brown diapered background. One series represents the Annunciation, the Nativity, Christ among the Doctors, speaking from a pulpit, and the Good Shepherd. The Incarnation is figured allegorically by the Blessed Virgin alluring to her the Lamb of God.

The city of Le Puy was formerly surrounded by walls erected by the citizens against the Routiers, the Free Companies, and those troublesome near neighbours the Polignacs. But their house was divided against itself, for bishop and chapter were continually at strife with the citizens, and to protect themselves against the turbulence of these latter, the ecclesiastics drew an inner ring of walls about themselves on the height above the town.

In the tortuous streets may be seen many specimens of medieval domestic architecture, angle-turrets, doorways richly carved, and if one can look into the court-yards, some dainty subjects for the pencil may be obtained.

But after having seen the cathedral and the old town, the feet are attracted to S. Michel l'Aiguilhe.

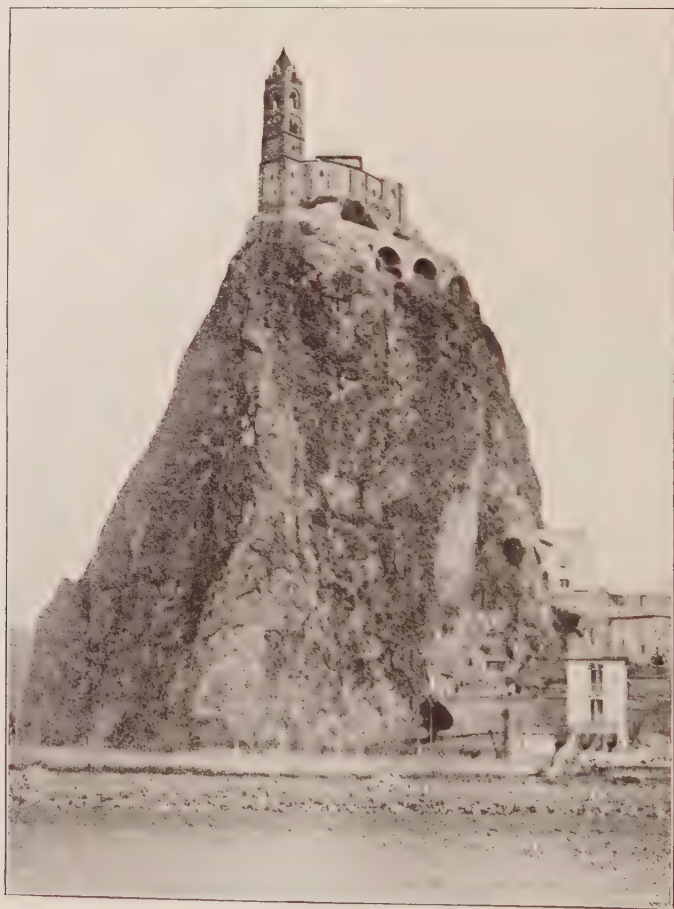
"The rock of S. Michel," says M. Paulett Scrope, "seems to contain a dyke, which may probably have been erupted on this spot. It is, however, of course evident that the conglomerate of which it is composed must have been originally enveloped and supported by surrounding beds of softer materials, since worn away by aqueous erosion."

The plan of the church on the pinnacle of rock is peculiar, resembling the attitude of a sleeping dog. The chancel lies beside the main entrance, at a higher level, and the nave is curved and has an aisle also on





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L'AIGUILLE, LE PUY

a curve, divided from it by columns and arches, the former with carved capitals of the end of the twelfth century, but with one or two of an earlier date. The entrance is a superb specimen of Byzantine-Romanesque work. The carving in tufa is delicate, and every portion of surface not sculptured is inlaid with mosaic. The chancel is the oldest part of the church, and may possibly belong to the original structure consecrated in 980; but all the rest is two centuries later, and the tower is a copy in small of that of the cathedral.

How did the builders of those days construct churches and donjons on the tops of these obelisks? The Rabbis say that an angel can pirouette on the point of a needle, but the work done here is more wonderful than that of balancing for a few minutes on an acute point, for the masons had to fill in all the rifts of the rock so as to form a terrace on which to build. They must have been let down in cradles. As to the tower, it was probably built up from within, as is done nowadays with a factory chimney. On a lower level than the doorway are the ruins of the habitation of the chaplain who served the church. He could obtain plenty of fresh air there to fill his lungs, but could not get exercise to circulate his blood, save by running up and down the stair in the face of the rock.

On the way up to the chapel may be noticed recesses cut out of the cliff. These formerly contained statues of saintly helpers in all kinds of difficult and unpleasant situations. Among these was S. Wilgefortis, a young lady with beard and moustache, much invoked by women with vexatious husbands, who wanted to be rid of them. A fine statue of her is in Henry VII.'s Chapel at Westminster. The Huguenots destroyed all these

figures in the niches. They were restored and again broken up at the Revolution, but have not been reinstated.

In the same hamlet of l'Aiguilhe is a circular Romanesque chapel, called the Temple of Diana, but which is actually a structure of the twelfth century. It is now undergoing repair.

The church of St. Laurent has been given a modern gable with pinnacles to the west front out of keeping with the character of the original architecture. The western doorway was once rich, and had on it two ranges of angels, twelve in each. The Huguenots broke the figures in their hatred of everything beautiful, and mutilated the delicate foliage as well.

The church has a broad nave with narrow side aisles. It contains a carved stone organ gallery once rich with statuary, but the niches are now empty. On the north side in the aisle is the tomb of Du Guesclin, who did more than any other, except the Maid of Orléans, to drive the English out of France. Even this monument did not escape the iconoclastic rage of the Calvinists; but it has been judiciously restored.

Guyenne, Poitou, Saintonge, Perigord, Brittany had been in turn the theatre of his victories; but the war continued in Languedoc. Bands of the Free Companies desolated the Gevaudan, Auvergne, and Le Velay. The nobles and towns unassisted could not expel them, and appealed to Charles V. to send them an experienced captain who would aid them against these brigands, and he despatched thither Du Guesclin. In August, 1380, the Constable entered Le Puy, and in a few days had assembled an army. He then departed for the Gevaudan to lay siege to Châteauneuf Randon,

the head-quarters of the English routiers. The Constable besieged the place, attempted to take it by assault, but failed; and he vowed that he would not withdraw till it was captured. The garrison defended themselves valiantly, but at length agreed to capitulate. Du Guesclin was suffering at the time from a mortal sickness, and he lay on his deathbed when the terms of capitulation were agreed upon.

He died on the 13th of July according to history, on the 14th as stated on his monument; and upon the day fixed for the surrender the Governor laid the keys on the coffin of the deceased Constable. Charles V. ordered the body to be transported to S. Denys; but it was first taken to the Dominican church of Saint Laurent, there to be embalmed. The intestines of the great warrior that were removed alone occupy the tomb there erected.

The recumbent statue well answers to the description he gave of himself: "*Les épaules larges, le col court, la tête monstreuse; je suis fort laid, jamais je ne serai bienvenu des dames, mais saurais me faire craindre des ennemis de mon roi.*"

The cathedral library of Le Puy contains a copy of the Bible written by Theodulf, Bishop of Orléans (788-821), a friend of Alcuin of York. This MS. was written by his own hand whilst in prison at Angers for having been involved in the conspiracy of Bernard, King of Italy, against Louis "*le Debonaire*," a son of Charlemagne. On Palm Sunday the King was at Angers and rode through the streets. As he passed under the prison, Theodulf thrust his head out of the window, and at the top of his voice chanted a poem he had composed in honour of Louis. The prince drew

rein and listened. Flattery, however fulsome, goes a long way. He was pleased with it, though "laid on with a trowel," and ordered the release of the Bishop. It is said that, when in captivity, Theodulf had vowed to give to the church of Le Puy the Bible he had transcribed in his dungeon.

The MS. is written partly on white vellum and partly on vellum stained purple. On the white sheets the letters are in black, with the capitals in vermilion; but on the purple pages are in silver, and the capitals in goldleaf. The cover was repaired in the reign of Francis I., the velvet of the ninth century being overlaid with velvet of the sixteenth. At the Revolution this precious relic would have been flung into the flames that consumed the Black Virgin had it not been for the richness of the cover, with its ornaments of silver-gilt and the precious stones with which it was encrusted. The text is not divided into verses, and there is no punctuation, for the use of punctuation did not become general till the tenth century. The text is that of the Vulgate as corrected by Alcuin. Several of the passages in the Vulgate as now used differ from those in the version employed by Theodulf; and the Psalter is not that of the Vulgate. The preservation of the writing is due to pieces of fine tissue having been placed between the leaves, and of these fifty-three remain, and are interesting specimens of the textures of the time of Charles the Great. The Bible has poems composed by Theodulf prefixed to and following the sacred text.

Five of the early bishops of Le Puy are accounted saints, though almost nothing is known about them. They must have monopolised the stock of sanctity

allotted to that Church, for of their successors none could lay claim to much holiness, and many were a disgrace to their order. But Le Puy was one of the richest sees in France, as the bishop was count as well as prelate. The volcanic soil was extraordinarily fertile, and the Black Virgin acted as a magnet, attracting to it an inexhaustible stream of gold ; and this made the see to be coveted by ambitious and appropriated by unscrupulous prelates. Add to this that the bishop was under the jurisdiction of no archbishop, and was responsible to the Pope alone, who was too far off and too busy with affairs of greater importance to trouble himself about the misdeeds of the prelate princes of Le Puy.

It is open to debate which does most harm to the Church, the occasional torrential rush through the ranks of the episcopate of some wild blood, whose life is conspicuously at variance with his profession, or a continuous and unabating flood invading every see of smug, smooth, and colourless nonentities, who dilute the quality, abate the force, and lower the temperature of the Church to insipidity, lukewarmness, and inertia.

Some instances will suffice to show what manner of men they were who now and then were bishops of Le Puy.

Adhelmar (1087-98), who died at Antioch as a Crusader, was succeeded by Ponce de Tournon, who was an assassin. Bertrand de Chalençon's hands were also stained by blood ; he exasperated his flock to madness by his exactions, heavily fining widows who remarried, and levying exorbitant fees on burials. When Innocent III. proclaimed a holy war against the Albigenses, and promised pardon for all sins to such



as should outrage, rob, and murder these heretics, Bertrand headed an army of Crusaders, composed of the riff-raff of Velay, Auvergne, and the Gevaudan, and marched south. The citizens of one town at his approach, terrified at the prospect presented to them, fired their city and fled to the dens and caves of the earth. They were premature. Bertrand was more greedy of gold than of blood, and he made the towns as he passed buy exemption from destruction, and pocketed the money himself, to the rage and resentment of his followers. But they had full scope for their brutal instincts at Béziers on June 22nd, 1209, when, at the most moderate calculation, 20,000 persons, men, women, and children, indiscriminately Catholics and heretics, were butchered, and the papal legate looking on, is reported to have said, smiling, "Kill all; God will know His own!"

Bernard de Montaignu (1237-48), to enforce recognition of his seigneurial rights, subjected the city to an interdict, and excommunicated the flock he was set to feed.

William de la Roue (1263-82) had appointed De Rochebaron as his bailiff. This man fell in love with the beautiful wife of a butcher in the town, lured her within the precincts of the ecclesiastical fortifications, and outraged her. The guild of the butchers complained to the prelate, who scoffed at the deputation, and refused to reprimand his bailiff. The city was in commotion. When a party of the prelate's men-at-arms returned from an expedition, after harrying the peasantry in the country, and were laden with the spoils, the people rose. The tocsin sounded. The butchers came down with their cleavers. There was



fighting in the streets. The troopers were despoiled of their plunder, and were obliged to take refuge within the walls of the bishop's fortress. William de la Roue was furious. He sent down the obnoxious bailiff with all the force he could muster to chastise the citizens. But they were surrounded by the enraged populace, and driven to take refuge in the Franciscan convent. The butchers with their choppers hewed down the door and slew the provost and six sergeants. De Rochebaron fled up the tower. The butchers pursued, caught him hiding among the bells, flung him down, and his mangled body was hewn to pieces.

Eventually the bishop reduced the city to subjection. He had its consuls hung in chains, and put to death all the butchers on whom he could lay his hands. The old town, built about a volcanic dyke, was ill provided with water. The wells tapped no springs, and were filled with surface-water only, and the soil was impregnated with sewage soaking down from every street and yard and lane through the joints in the rock. As a natural result typhoid fever—or the Pestilence, as the people called it—broke out, and became endemic. Frantic at this, the citizens looked about for a cause, and looked in the wrong direction. It did not occur to them that they poisoned their own wells. They assumed that the sickness was due to a league among the lepers, jealous of the health and happiness of sound men, and that they insidiously poured poison into the pits. In 1321, after a great outbreak of the plague, the citizens complained to the bishop, Durand de S. Pourcain. Perhaps he shared their conviction, perhaps he sought only to gratify the people. He swept together all the lepers in the county and burned them alive.

Le Puy saw the formation of a remarkable confederacy that promised at first to achieve the liberation of the country from the scourge of the routiers.

These bands of lawless men, under captains of their own selection, overran the country, levying blackmail, and pretending that they were in the service of the English King ; or, if it suited them better, in that of the King of France. They passed from one allegiance to the other indifferently. Actually they served neither one side nor the other, but themselves. The merchants were robbed, the farmers despoiled, towns plundered. Existence became intolerable. Castles were erected on the top of rocks accessible only by a goat-path, or by steps cut in the stone, and there nests were built by the robbers for themselves. In these strongholds the captains and their companies lived riotously with bold women, sometimes nuns, whom they had carried off. The routiers held churches in special aversion, and plundered them without scruple. At their orgies they drank out of chalices, and vested their harlots in the silks and velvets of ecclesiastical wardrobes.

Such was the condition of affairs when, in 1182, a carpenter of Le Puy, named Pierre Durand, announced that a paper had fluttered down to him from heaven bearing on it a likeness of the Blessed Virgin, and that he had been commanded to found a society to combat and extinguish the routiers. At first the Bishop of Le Puy looked coldly on the carpenter. But the man obtained adherents. The need of combination to rid the country of a general nuisance was so largely felt, that Durand readily obtained a hearing and enrolled followers. According to the Laon Chronicle, the carpenter was a tool in the hands of one of the canons,

who got a young man to dress up and pose as an apparition of the Virgin and so influence Durand. Be that as it may, the movement grew with rapidity. Durand gave to his adherents a white hood, with a medal to be worn on the breast, bearing a representation of N. D. du Puy, and the invocation, "Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace." Bishop Peter IV., now that the movement promised to be a success, thought well to assume a lead in it. He had a platform erected, on which he took his stand along with the carpenter; he flourished the heaven-sent daub, asserted its genuineness, and exhorted his hearers to assume the white hood. The growth of the confraternity was now rapid. Clergy, monks, merchants, farmers, artisans, nobles joined it. Great armies of these Brethren of Peace marched against the routiers, defeated them in pitched battles, stormed their castles and burnt them. After a victory, no quarter was accorded. For the nonce the freebooters were quelled, and quailed before the people risen in a body to lynch their tormenters. But the victories they had won, the applause they had drawn on themselves, made the White Hoods headstrong and presumptuous. They knew well enough that the routiers only existed because the princes and nobles were at strife with one another; and now they pressed on the feudal lords, to insist on the abolition of private war, and to threaten such as would not submit, with the same treatment as that dealt out to the routiers. At the same time they adopted communistic notions, and refused submission to all authorities save those of their own election. They swarmed over the country and devoured the produce of the land. They had lost all

appetite for peaceful avocations ; and they threatened to become as great a peril as had been the freebooters. The nobles leagued against them, the royal forces were set in motion ; the White Hoods were defeated and butchered without compunction, and the society founded for a good purpose came to an end, and its disappearance gave free scope for the great Companies to reorganise and resume their depredations.

When the massacre of S. Bartholomew was determined on in 1572, sealed orders were sent to the Count-Bishop of Le Puy as to all other governors to order a butchery of the Huguenots. Antoine de S. Nectaire was bishop at the time. He was the brother of the famous Madelaine who had been married to Guy de Miremont. Left a widow when young, beautiful, and rich, she was surrounded by aspirants after her hand. Madelaine had embraced the reform of Calvin. She enrolled her sixty lovers in a corps to serve as bodyguard. A word, a look sufficed to send this enthusiastic corps to smash crucifixes, burn villages, and storm castles. She rode in armour at the head of her suitors, and of an army that had gathered about her eager for plunder. She advanced to the gates of Riom and Clermont at its head, taking fortresses and burning towns and villages on her way. The King's Lieutenant, the Sieur de Montal, was routed by her in several encounters, and he, exasperated at his humiliation, resolved on storming and destroying her castle of Miremont, to which she had withdrawn. So soon as he appeared before it, at the head of the royal troops, she issued from the gates, her visor raised and mounted on a noble steed, sword in hand, followed by her bodyguard, engaged the lieutenant in single combat and smote

him from his steed. Finally, after an ineffectual siege that lasted forty days, Madelaine forced the royal host to retire. "Ventre saint gris!" exclaimed Henry of Navarre, "if I were not king, I would desire to be Madelaine de Saint Nectaire!" This by the way.

Her brother was Bishop of Le Puy, and by no means inclined to accept Calvinism. When the order came to him requiring a massacre of the Huguenots in Le Puy, he called the consuls together, and read to them the royal letter. "Messieurs," said he, "this concerns only rebels and disloyal Calvinists, and there are none such here. We read in the Gospel that the love of God and of our neighbours form the sum of the Law and the Prophets. Let us live together as a Christian people in all good charity."

This was excellent. If we knew no more of him than this, we would set him down as an enlightened prelate and a man of high principle. But unhappily it is not all.

Next year the Calvinists had entered the Province, and had captured several places; amongst others Fay-le-Froid. The Bishop at once, with promptitude, marched thither at the head of five hundred men. He rode a richly caparisoned mule, clad in black armour, with a gold cross on his breast, and his arms, five silver spindles on a field azure, emblazoned on his mantle. He was a magnificent man, ruddy-faced, with bright blue eyes and a flowing white beard. He was of Herculean strength, and as canon law forbade a Churchman shedding blood, he bore a heavy club with which to brain the enemies of the King and of the Church. In his train were two cannons. As he arrived unexpectedly before Fay-le-Froid, the town surrendered. He swept

the inhabitants and the rebel garrison together, and hung as many as were involved in the insurrection. "What a lamentable scene it was," wrote a contemporary author; "poor women weeping, tearing their hair, pleading for the lives of their husbands, their brothers, and their friends; but Mgr. de Saint Nectaire would not so much as vouchsafe them a look."

Then, with the bodies dangling from the gibbets, he had an altar erected in the public square and a Mass sung, whilst his pikemen prodded the Calvinists at the proper moment to oblige them to cross themselves and to kneel.

The Bishop returned to Le Puy highly elated at his success, but his elation was damped on his arrival by hearing that in the meantime the Huguenots had captured his castle at Espaly, at the very door of Le Puy, and were menacing the capital. He made his way in with all speed, and despatched a courier to the Baron de S. Vidal to come to his aid.

Espaly was then a walled town at the foot of a trap dyke that shoots above the Borne, and on which stood a castle, the summer residence of the bishops.

The castle had been erected in the thirteenth century by William de la Roue, of whose misdeeds I have already told. It was completed by Jean de Bourbon (1443-85). The part taken by this prelate in the League of the Public Good brought on Espaly the horrors of a siege. But it suffered especially in the Wars of Religion. Within thirty years it was taken and retaken by Huguenots and Catholics eight times.

The story of the last siege is sufficiently curious to be told.

In 1574, Vidal Guyard, a hatmaker of Le Puy, placed



himself at the head of a hundred and twenty Calvinists, and, favoured by the moon, on the night of January 9th approached Espaly, and by penetrating into the castle by a drain succeeded in surprising the garrison and making themselves masters of the place. The news reached Le Puy through fugitives from the town, and next day the young men of the city, acting against the advice of the Bishop, determined on retaking the fortress. A crowd of citizens armed, assumed a white cross on their breasts, and marched against the place. But heavy rain came on, they were drenched to the skin, and their powder and courage were damped, so they returned having effected nothing. The Calvinists now set to work to destroy the houses in the little town, sparing only such as were redeemed by their owners with a heavy money payment.

On January 20th the Baron de S. Vidal, whom the Bishop had summoned to his aid, assembled troops at Le Puy and marched to Espaly, forced his way into the town, but could effect nothing against the castle, that was accessible by one path only, cut in the face of the rock. One of the garrison with his arquebus wounded S. Vidal in the shoulder. After that they made a sortie and did much execution among the besiegers.

S. Vidal, despairing of reducing the place by force of arms, resolved on trying negotiation. But Guyard demanded such an exorbitant sum for its surrender that it was refused. S. Vidal now tried stratagem. He framed a letter, as from Guyard, addressed to the consuls of Le Puy, offering to deliver up the castle, his lieutenant Morfouse, and the garrison, if his own life were spared and he were liberally rewarded. This letter was smuggled into the fortress, read by Morfouse,



and in a paroxysm of jealousy and alarm he and the rest fell on Guyard and killed him. Then they entered into communication with S. Vidal, and surrendered on February 3rd, the day on which the baron received the news of his nomination by the King to be governor of Le Velay. Le Puy itself had undergone a siege by the Huguenots twelve years before this.

In 1562 the terrible Baron des Adrets, who was in Dauphiné stamping out every spark of Catholicism, deputed his lieutenant, Blacons, to secure Le Puy. Blacons was a man as ruthless as his commander, but without his military genius. It was settled that Blacons should assemble an army at Pont-en-Peyrat, a village on the borders of Forez and Velay. Thither accordingly gathered the Calvinists and a horde of adventurers thirsting for the pillage of the wealthy city and the shrine of the Madonna. The consuls of Le Puy sent the brother of their seneschal, Christopher d'Allègre, with 20,000 livres to treat with Blacons, and offer this sum if he would divert his column on some other town. Christopher d'Allègre, who was himself a Calvinist, and had been selected for the embassy on that ground, pocketed the money without intimating to Blacons the purpose for which it had been confided to him, and was instant in urging the Huguenot captain to capture and sack the city. The consuls, bishop, and chapter met in consultation and armed all the male inhabitants of the place, and hastily repaired the fortifications.

On August 4th arrived the citizens of S. Paulien, escaping with their goods and chatels from the Calvinists with terrible stories of outrage and murder committed by them. The alarm-bells pealed ; a message was sent

to the Viscount Polignac for aid, but he remained inert on the top of his rock, alleging that he had not a force sufficient at his disposal to be able materially to assist the citizens.

On the night of the same day the siege began. The Huguenots crossed the Borne, which was then dry, and planted their cannon. After a steady bombardment they rushed to the assault, and a desperate struggle ensued. Towards evening of August 5th the resistance of the citizens slackened, and the Calvinists pressed on, when a postern was thrown open and out poured a body of monks and friars variously armed. They fell upon the enemy in flank and put them to rout. The members of the monasteries and convents round Le Puy had fled to the city at the approach of Blacons, and had been clustered on the top of the rock Corneille watching events. Observing the progress of the Huguenots, and knowing that if the city fell every one of them would be hung or hurled down the rock, they had gone to the episcopal armoury and seized whatever weapons came to hand; and these men determined the fate of the engagement.

The disconcerted Huguenots retired for the night to Espaly. Next day they returned to the assault, and planted their cannon on a height whence they could play on the town. The suburb of Aiguilhe fell into their hands and was sacked. The hospital and the monasteries were burnt, the church of S. Laurence and the chapel of S. Michael were plundered and the carved work mutilated. If the latter escaped better than the former, it was due to the height at which it stood, and the danger attending any who climbed aloft to smash the sculptures with axes and hammers.

On the third day the Calvinists met with no better success. One man troubled them greatly, an aged hermit from the Mont Denise, who had been an artillery officer in his younger days. He was now very old and bent double; but the fire of battle kindled in his veins, and he undertook the disposition of the artillery and pointed the guns. "That holy man," says a contemporary historian, "did so well that he killed more men than did all the arquebusiers together."

The Huguenots lost heart and demanded a parley. They sent Christopher d'Allègre as their envoy into the city. This man must have been endowed with considerable effrontery to accept such an office, after having betrayed and robbed his fellow-citizens. He appeared before the consuls with a confident air, and demanded that the gates should be thrown open to Blacons. "How can you suppose," said he, "that we intend harm, we who are zealous propagators of the Reformed religion and the defenders of the oppressed? We are incapable of committing acts of violence. We will not exact of you any contribution, not even food for our men. All that we seek is to hew in pieces the gods of wood and stone and emblems that profane the temple of the living God."

But the consuls knew what such protestations were worth, by the experience of the refugees of S. Paulien, which had offered no resistance to the Huguenots. They dismissed the envoy, and he returned to stimulate the investing army to renewed exertions. At once, in a paroxysm of zeal, the host rushed again to the attack; but the citizens sallied forth, cut them down, and made many captures.

Next day the consuls and the bishop hoisted flags on

every tower, and minstrels paraded the walls playing lively tunes on hautboys, fifes, and clarions.

Blacons supposed that they must have received reinforcements. He called his officers together and said, "See, gentlemen, how the citizens of Le Puy mock us! Let us chastise them severely for such imprudent and unseemly mirth." But he could no longer rouse his host to venture on another assault. His soldiery dispersed over the open country to sack and burn villages, desecrate churches, and hang such priests as they could take. They completely wrecked five or six monasteries, the castles of the bishop, and they set fire to the peasants' harvests, so that a sheet of flame ran over the country as far as the eye could see. In a few days the cannon were withdrawn, and not a Calvinist in arms remained before the walls of Le Puy.

So the city can boast proudly, "*Civitas non vincitur, nec vincetur,*" or in the words of Odo de Gissey, "*Ne fut oncq' surmontée, ni le sera.*"



## CHAPTER IV

### ROUND ABOUT LE PUY

Limitations of language—Guides to Le Velay—Espaly—The castle—Death of Charles VI.—The Orgues—Baron de S. Vidal—La Roche Lambert—Polignac—The oracle of Apollo—S. Paulien—Roman remains—Julien, the sculptor—Barrier of the Loire—Vorey—La Lepreuse—Chamalières—Mézens—Les Estables—Ascent—La Foire aux Violettes—The violet harvest—Flora of Mézens—Gerbier de Jonc—View—Lake of Issarlès—Menaced—A man without a chance in life—Le Monastier—Stevenson's estimate of the people—The abbey—Change of names—Arlempdes—Caves of Chacornac—Mandrin—The haunted mill of Perbet.

THERE exist but a limited number of terms wherewith to describe an infinite variety of natural objects that possess one common character, but differ from one another in every other particular. Needle, spike, pinnacle, spire, obelisk have to serve for all rocks that start up from the soil and terminate in a point. Ravine, gorge, fissure, chasm, cañon have to be employed indiscriminately for those clefts in the surface, rents formed by the contraction on cooling of the earth's crust, or by the erosion of water. And yet all the difference in the world exists between spires of tufa and trap and those of granite or of limestone. The gorge down which swirls the river between calcareous walls is one thing, that which is cleft into a street lined



BASALT, ESPALY





with basaltic columns is another, yet the same term must be employed for both.

If it fell to me to describe all the most remarkable sites in Le Velay, I should have to use these expressions *ad nauseam*, and leave off with the consciousness that I had conveyed to the mind of the reader but a poor idea of the wonders of a wondrous land.

Happily for me, my purpose is not so extensive. I have not undertaken to write a guide-book. Baedeker has given us the skeleton of a tour in this region in five pages. Joanne has clothed the bones with flesh and blood in thirteen or fourteen, and Ardouin Dumazet has breathed into it the breath of life in three hundred and seventy. Moreover, a Syndicat d'Initiative exists at Le Puy that distributes gratis a capital guide to the sights around. But it does more than this. Throughout the summer, at a trifling cost, it organises excursions, provides vehicles to every point of interest that can be visited in a day.

A farmer does not take to market all the corn thrashed out of his stack, but a sample of his produce. He opens his hand and displays the grain to a would-be purchaser, and all I can pretend to do in this chapter is to give a few samples of what Le Velay has to show to a visitor, and I shall begin with Espaly, easily reached by electric tram. There, out of the valley of the Borne, rise two volcanic crags, washed by the river. One of these is surmounted by a toy castle, a battlemented summer-house that belongs to a gentleman of Le Puy. The other, and by far the finer, was once capped by the castle of the bishops of Le Puy. In this a bishop-designate halted the night before making his entry into the city, and here, before he was suffered to enter, the

consuls of the town exacted from him an oath to respect its liberties. Charles the Dauphin, son of Charles VI., was staying in this castle in 1422, on October 25th, when, at 7 p.m., he received the tidings of the death of his father, which had taken place five days before. He at once ordered the *De profundis* to be chanted, and put on mourning, which he quitted on the 27th to array himself in purple velvet. Mass was performed, and then the banner of France was unfurled to shouts of "Vive le Roy!" After that he departed for Poitiers, where he was crowned.

By far the finest view of the rocks is to be had from the bridge over the Borne.

Of the castle almost nothing remains. It was blown up by order of S. Vidal, and now the fragments are incorporated in a wall set with peepholes, and surmounted by what looks like a gigantic gasholder, but which is intended to serve as a pedestal for a colossal statue of S. Joseph.

The Orgues d'Espaly attract visitors. The organ front forms the face of a spur of Mont Denise, and is composed of ranges of basaltic columns. We shall see others far finer in the gorge of the Allier and in the mountains of Vivarais.

Some way up the valley of the Borne stand the well-preserved ruins of the castle of Saint Vidal, the sturdy Leaguer. Near this are a cascade of the Borne and the ravine of Estreys.

Antoine, Baron de la Tour, and de Segard, and de S. Vidal, Governor of Le Velay, made a desperate and ineffectual effort, conjointly with the Governor of the Vivarais, in 1572, to capture the castle of Beaudiné in Velay, held by the Huguenot captain, La Vacheresse,

who had secured it by stratagem, and who from it issued to ravage the country, destroy churches, hang priests and monks, and levy blackmail on the villages.

Two months later he was wounded at Espaly, as related. In the same year he was successful in dispossessing the Calvinists of five other castles. Then he besieged and took the town of Tence, hung the pastors, and gave up the inhabitants to massacre.

In 1577 he laid siege to Ambert in Auvergne, but failed to take it, and retired discomfited. By royal command, in 1580 he advanced upon S. Agrève, which had become the head-quarters of the Calvinists in the Vivarais. During the siege he lost an eye. After having taken measures for the defence of Le Puy, which was menaced by Polignac, who was at war with the city, he hastened to the relief of Bédoués in the Gevaudan, that was besieged by the redoubted Captain Merle, but was unsuccessful.

A few years later, in 1586, he left Le Puy with six cannons to assist the Duke of Joyeuse in the siege of Malziac. It was taken, and he was appointed governor; he also obtained the governorship of Marvejols, which capitulated after a siege of eight days. In 1588 he was before S. Agrève for the second time, and he took it and levelled the town walls. Devoted to the cause of the League, he hotly and zealously contested the governorship of Velay with De Chattes, who had been appointed by Henry IV. In 1590 he beseiged Espaly again, burnt the town, and blew up the castle. In a negotiation in 1591 between the Royalists and the Leaguers the quarrel took so personal a turn that S. Vidal and the commandant of Le Puy challenged De Chattes and another to duel, and in it S. Vidal fell.



Still further up this picturesque stream is the Castle de La Roche Lambert, the theatre of Georges Sand's novel *Jean de la Roche*.

"I may say without exaggeration that I was reared in a rock. The castle of my fathers is strangely incrusting into an excavation in a wall of basalt five hundred feet high. The base of this wall, with that face to face with it of identically the same rock, form a narrow and sinuous valley, through which winds and leaps an inoffensive torrent in impetuous cascades, athwart delicious meadows shaded by willows and nut trees.

"This Château de la Roche is a nest—a nest of troglodites, inasmuch as the whole flank of the rock we occupy is riddled with holes and irregular chambers which tradition points to as the residence of ancient savages, and which antiquaries do not hesitate to attribute to a prehistoric people.

"The castle of my fathers is planted high up on a ledge of rock, but so that the tops of the conical roofs of the towers just reach above the level of the plain. One detail will illustrate our situation. My mother having poor health, and having no other place to walk save one little platform before the castle on the edge of the abyss, took it into her head to create for herself a garden at the summit of the crag on which we were perched."

The castle, which Georges Sand describes as in a dilapidated condition, and a "vrai bijou d'architecture," is small, and its chambers are scooped out of the rock. It has been carefully restored, and is a museum of medieval antiquities, armour, old cabinets, and tapestry.

The road from Le Puy to Paris quits the valley of the Borne, and ascends the slopes of Mont Denise. As it mounts it commands grand views. To the east is stretched the long chain culminating in Mézenc, and



CASTLE OF LA ROCHE LAMBERT





Mégál with its group of *sucs*. M. Paulett Scrope's panorama should be taken so as to identify the peaks.

After turning the flank of Mont Denise, the most modern of the volcanoes, a basin opens before one, out of which starts up the lava mass, like a huge pork-pie, that supports the scanty remains of the Castle of Polignac, the eagle nest of this mighty family. At the foot of the crag lies the village like a red girdle encircling it. Only the donjon of the fortress remains perfect, repaired in 1893-7 by Heracleus Armand XXV., Duke of Polignac. The entire platform was at one time covered with buildings; now only foundations can be traced. But the fallen masses have revealed the fact that this was a stronghold before the Polignacs were thought of. It was certainly a prehistoric fortress, then a Gaulish oppidum, next a Roman station. The name has been supposed to derive from Apollo, who is thought to have had a temple here, whence oracles were delivered. Within the precincts is a vault in which is the mouth of a well 250 feet deep reaching to a spring. It is conjectured that a colossal mask of stone, with open mouth, represents the bearded head of a local Apollo, and that priests concealed in the subterranean chamber uttered oracles which were made to issue from the mouth. What is more certain is that an inscription of the time of the Emperor Claudius has been found here, and that Roman tablets are built into the walls of the little Romanesque church below the rock.

The Paris road leads onwards to S. Paulien, the ancient Ruessio capital of the tribe of the Velavi. It has little to interest the visitor. A stone now surmounted by a cross is called *Lou Peyrou dou tresvirs*, the stone of the Triumviri, on which are carved three heads;



the church, reconstructed in the ninth century, stands on the ruins of an edifice of the fourth. Some Roman fragments are incrusting in the walls. Above the town, built into modern constructions, are many fragments of the old city. The chapel of N. Dame du Haut-Solier has been regarded as occupying the site of a temple dedicated to the sun, and is built up of Gallo-Roman materials. Hereabouts the spade is continually turning up relics, among others were found a head of Jupiter Serapis, and inscriptions, of which one is commemorative of Etruscilla, wife of the Emperor Decius. The chapel of the Sisters of S. Joseph possesses a Romanesque doorway with bold zigzag ornament, removed from the ruined commandery of Montredon.

S. Paulien was the birthplace of the sculptor Julien, of whose work some specimens may be seen in the museum at Le Puy. He was a shepherd boy, the son of very poor parents, but he had an uncle in the Jesuit Order. One day this priest, walking on a bit of wild moor scantily covered with coarse grass and juniper bushes, lit on his nephew, then aged fourteen, guarding his flock, and engaged in modelling a figure out of clay with a bit of stick. The lad looked up with his brown, intelligent eyes, coloured, and said—

“Sorry, mon père, that the figure is so bad.”

“Bad!” exclaimed the priest. “Do you call that bad? On the contrary, I pronounce it admirable. Go on and prosper.” He hastened back to S. Paulien, burst in on the Julien family, and insisted on their surrendering the lad to him. “He is moulding a saint out of clay,” said the Jesuit. “Give me that lump of humanity, and I will shape it into a great artist.” So the uncle carried off young Julien and committed him

to the sculptor Samuel at Le Puy. The pupil speedily surpassed his master, and went to Lyons, and thence to Paris, where he was under Coustin, sculptor to the King. He was elected to the Academy in 1778, and was highly favoured by Louis XVI. But evil days came, not for nobles only, but also for artists. The Revolution broke out, and men were more busy in framing constitutions than in fostering art. Not till the times of the Consulate and Empire was occupation found for sculptors and painters. However, Julien had made sufficient money before the upheaval to be able to purchase for himself a little estate near Le Puy, and to that he retired till better days came. He was born in 1731, and died in the Louvre, in 1804. His bust as a shepherd boy adorns a fountain at S. Paulien.

After traversing the basin of Emblavès below Le Puy, the Loire enters a second defile, where its passage was barred by a great current of clinkstone, or laminated lava, poured forth from Mézenc, and of this two colossal remnants exist, the rocks Miaune and Gerbison, rising one on each side of the river to a height of 1,800 feet above it. This enormous dyke suddenly thrown across the valley must have caused the waters of the Loire to accumulate into a vast lake, till they effected their escape by sawing through it.

Where, further up, the Arzon flows into the Loire is Vorey, lapped in a fold of the mountains, facing Gerbison, which is striated with rills descending in small cascades.

On June 16th, annually, is celebrated at Vorey a Mass "de la Lepreuse," which is attended by the people of the hamlets of Vertaure and Eyravazet. Once upon

a time a ragged leper woman arrived at the latter cluster of houses and begged for food. No one would give her even a crust of bread or a bowl of milk. She went on to Vertaure, and there fared as ill; and she crept for the night into an abandoned shed, where she remained too exhausted to proceed further, and there she died. Whereupon the people dug a deep pit and cast in the corpse and the woodwork and thatch of the shed, and heaped earth over the grave. The spot is still pointed out, and is called Las Cabannas. After that, for several years in succession, hailstorms smote the harvests and blighted the vines, whereas about Las Cabannas all remained green and flowery. Then the inhabitants of the two hamlets conceived that they were being punished for their lack of charity, and vowed a Mass in perpetuity for the repose of the leper-woman's soul. Her body was exhumed, conveyed to Vorey, and there buried in holy ground, and she herself received a popular canonisation as Ste. Juliette.

The Loire receives a goodly addition of water through the Arzon, and below Vorey descends through profound gorges to Chamalières, a village inhabited by quarrymen, and preserving one of the most curious and interesting Romanesque churches of the department. It is of the twelfth century, and has an arcaded clere-story. There are three windows in this clere-story on each side, and between the windows blind arches, some circular, some trefoil-headed. The tower is of two stages, with four windows on the first and two on the second, on each side; it is capped by a curious octagonal stone spire, rising from an octagonal lantern, with trefoil-headed windows, and nothing but a slight moulding indicates the junction.



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MEZENC

The Mézenc, the highest of the Cevennes, rises out of a dreary plateau. It is, says M. Paulett Scrope :—

“The most elevated of an extensive system of volcanic rocks, resting partly on granite or gneiss, and in part on the Jurassic formation, which by their position and constitution prove themselves to be the remains of a single and powerful volcano, of the same character as those in the Mont Dore and Cantal. Its products, however, are disposed in a somewhat different manner, being spread over an almost equally extensive surface without accumulating into such mountainous masses around their centre of eruption. Two causes seem to have contributed to occasion this diversity of aspect, namely: first, that the eruptions of this volcano appear to have been less frequent than in the other instances; secondly, that its lavas consist either of basalt or clinkstone almost exclusively. They therefore were possessed of great comparative fluidity; and having burst out on one of the highest eminences of the primary platform, which afforded a considerable slope in most directions, they appear to have flowed to great distances immediately upon their protusion from the volcanic vent.

“We shall be fully justified, by the universal declination of these volcanic beds from the Mont Mézenc, in fixing the site of the eruptions in its immediate proximity; and on the south-east of this rocky eminence, in the vicinity of the Croix des Boutières, there still exists a semicircular basin whose steep sides are entirely formed of scorix and loose masses of very cellular and reddish-coloured clinkstones.”

The desolate tableland over which one travels to reach Mézenc is well described by Georges Sand in her novel *Le Marquis de Villemer*, and the backward and unprogressive character of the inhabitants has not altered since her time.

The carriage is left at the village of Les Estables, a

poor and dirty place, where the natives shiver through half the year. Their condition is indeed miserable. Their cottages, built of lava-blocks, are thatched with straw, or roofed with clinkstone (*phonolith*). The street is filthy, encumbered with stones and deep in slime. Were it not for the lace industry and for the violet harvest, the place would be deserted. The cattle are lean and poor in quality, from lack of lime in the soil; the harvests ripen so late that when gathered in the crops are frequently spoilt.

At Ste. Eulalie, on the Sunday after the 12th July, is held the Foire aux Violettes. To that stream the cottagers from Les Estables and all the hamlets about Mézenc, laden with baskets heaped up with violets, and not violets only, but also the thousand aromatic herbs that luxuriate in this desolate region. The violets of Mézenc are so numerous and so large that in spring the mountain is arrayed in royal purple. The Mézenc violet is, moreover, more intense in colour than that of the Alps, and it retains its colour longer when dried. To this fair come the merchants of Lyons, Marseilles, and Nîmes. Every kind of simple used by druggists, every herb used for the production of essences, is there to be procured. But the violet is the staple of the trade. The air is scented with it, but the sweetness cannot neutralise the bad savour of the village—that defies suppression.

The flowers are gathered at the end of May by women and children. Then they are dried in the hay-loft, never allowed so to do in the sun. And when we buy the crystallised violet at Gunters, or try the withered flowers as a cure for cancer, ten to one but we are employing the produce of Mézenc, and putting a few



*petits sous* into the pockets of those leading a hard life in this southern Siberia.

The flora of Mézenc is subalpine, with many gaps. One rare plant alone is found on it, the *Senecio leucophyllus*, that flowers in August and September, and is found also on the Pyrenees at heights between 3,000 and 6,000 feet. It resembles the *Senecio maritimus* that grows on the Mediterranean littoral, which is cultivated in our gardens as an ornamental plant on account of its imbricated and silvery foliage.

Oaks here are low-growing and yield acorns once in six years, and beech once in four, whereas the service tree gives its fruit every year. This arrest of oak and beech is due to spring frosts when the trees are in flower, and an early winter forbids the glands and mast to ripen even when formed.

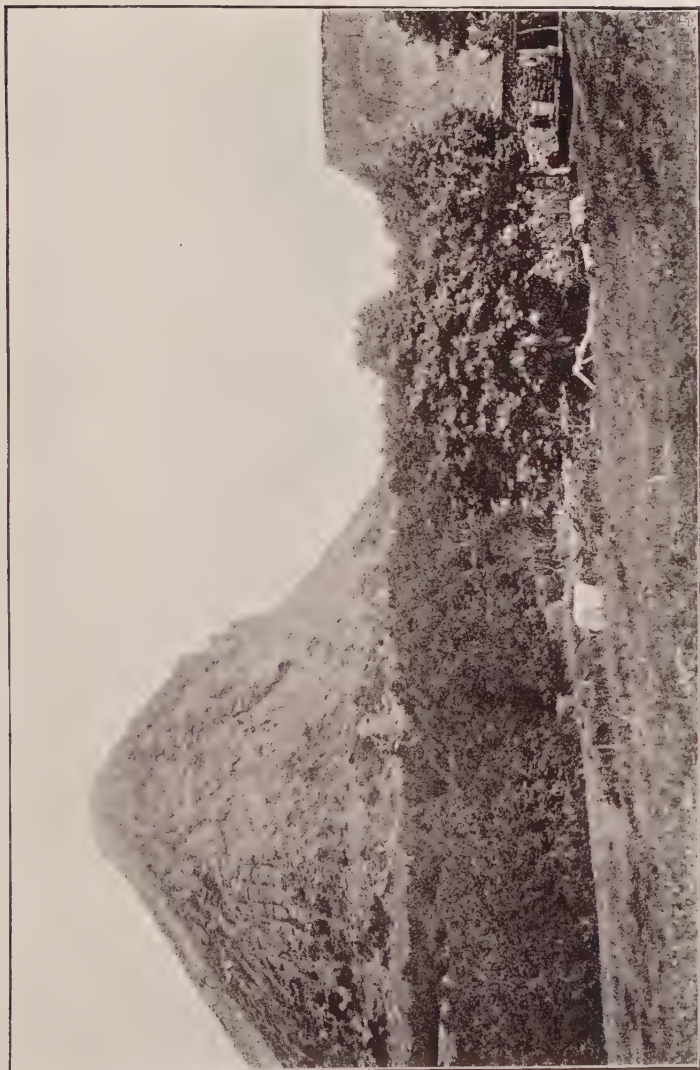
It is quite easy to "do" Mézenc from Le Puy in a day. That admirable institution, the Syndicat d'Initiative, provides a conveyance, starting from the capital every Sunday morning in summer at 5 a.m., and from Estables the mountain may be climbed in an hour and a half. The conveyance is back at Le Puy at 10 p.m., and the cost of a seat is but five francs. But if the visitor desires to extend his expedition, he should seek the Gerbier de Jonc and the lake of Issarley and return by Le Monastier. But this will occupy two days.

The Gerbier de Jonc is a conical clinkstone mountain, not so high as the Mézenc, but commanding quite as fine a prospect. It has been compared not inaptly to a pine cone, bristling with foils of phonolith that make the ascent by no means easy. Indeed, from the source of the Loire at its foot it is but a climb of 530 feet, but

the dislocation of the rock and the steepness make the climb somewhat laborious.

“Yet—how one is repaid for the labour! The view over the Vivarais is one of inexpressible beauty. No other belvedere offers a view of such an ocean of peaks, puys, ridges, and precipices, such folds of mountains, such abysses, and such plateaux. I do not know any impression I have received quite comparable to that produced by the view from the Gerbier. The glare of southern sunlight gives extraordinary relief to the rocks and woods, the vast stretches of turf, to this illimitable world of mountains of every shape. There are panoramas more vast and sublime, but none more striking. The clouds drifting across the sky cast great patches of shadow over the storm-tossed and solidified ocean; and when the wind disperses the veil, it seems as though the abysses gaped suddenly under one’s eye, so deep are the clefts, so tumultuous are the crests of the mountains. And the Alps! yonder they are, far away on the horizon. To the south is the immeasurable mass of the tossed Cevennes; blue to the north stands the great boundary heap of Mont Pilat. Above the haze to the east calcareous walls rear themselves, much hacked about, and some heights thrusting forward their cliffs like the beaks of birds. On the side of Le Velay is a platform bristling with *sucs*. At the foot of the Gerbier is the nascent rill of the Loire crossing the road and flowing through a vast prairie in which ooze forth a thousand springs that plunge into the ravine in which the Loire gathers its waters.”—*Ardouin Dumazet*.

The lake of Issarlès is indisputably the most beautiful of the sheets of water in the Cevennes. It is circular, and has no visible exit. It swarms with trout, yet they do not breed in it, as these fish will not spawn unless they can go up stream to a suitable gravelly bed, and no stream enters Issarlès.





But if no stream issues visibly from the lake, numerous springs rise at the bottom of the bank that bounds it, due doubtless to filtration through the scoria, and unite to form a current sufficient to turn a mill before it reaches the Loire distant three-quarters of a mile.

This beautiful tarn, 330 feet deep in the middle, has been menaced more than once. The lake belonged in the Middle Ages to the Chartreuse of Bonnefoy, the ruins of which are in the neighbourhood, and which was founded in 1156 by a Seigneur of Mézenc. The Carthusians used the lake not only as a fishpond to furnish their table, but also as a reservoir for the irrigation of their meadows by means of canals.

In 1793 it ran its first risk. With the laudable object of draining marshy land and rendering such lake bottoms as could be reclaimed serviceable for culture, a law was passed on the 14th to 16th Frimaire (4th to 6th December), and at the beginning of 1794 the Citizen Auzillon was deputed to inspect and report on Issarlès. But he was driven back by storms of snow, and obliged to postpone his examination of the lake. He started again in July, and was accompanied by the deputy sent down from Paris to organise an expedition for hunting out and bringing to the lamp-post or the guillotine the priests and royalists who were supposed to be in concealment in the neighbourhood. Auzillon declared in his report that the draining of the lake would cause an unwarrantable expense and prove unprofitable. It lay, he said, in the crater of an extinct volcano, and that he had been unable by sounding to discover the depth.

The lake has been again threatened, this time with conversion into a reservoir for the water-supply of factories, to be established at a lower level.

A scene, however beautiful it may be, always acquires additional charm when with it is connected something of human interest. And this must serve as an excuse for my introducing here a story that attaches to Issarlès.

Beside the lake some years ago resided a man of singular character, a man over whose fortunes Fate seemed to have decreed "*pas de chance*." A memoir of this man was written after his death by an acquaintance. Pierre Noirot was born at Nîmes of a Protestant father and a Catholic mother. His father, Jacques, was a descendant of one of the Camisards, who had run his knife into the heart of the Abbé du Chayla at the Pont de Montvert. Noirot père had inherited from his ancestors nothing but an implacable hatred of Catholicism. He was a coarse-minded man of a brutal character, and was wholly uneducated. Having become a soldier, he passed from barrack to barrack, always quarrelsome, always discontented, always finding fault, so that he acquired the name of Captain Grumbler. When he left the army, he retired to Nîmes and lived on his pension. Inconsistently enough, he married a Catholic, a little needlewoman. Pierre was the fruit of this union. Mme. Noirot had him baptised privately by a priest of her religion. Jacques heard of this the same day, and mad with rage he fell on his wife and beat her so severely, though only just recovering from her confinement, that she died of the injuries inflicted upon her. From this moment the father bore an implacable dislike to his son. He sent him into the mountains to be fostered by peasants in the village of Issarlès, and thenceforth cared no further for him than to send grudgingly the meagre sum necessary for his keep.



Pierre grew up in rough surroundings. His foster-parents, Antoine and Véronique Vidil, had three children, two boys and a girl, but lost their sons in one day by typhoid fever. Only the little Geneviève remained to them, and the orphan, Pierre, whom thenceforth the Vidils regarded as their own. But among these rude peasants affection displayed itself uncouthly. Antoine Vidil was a man who rarely spoke, and expressed himself in monosyllables only, and when he corrected the children it was without discretion and with a heavy hand. The woman Vidil, stout and florid, was the reverse of her husband. She was effusive, noisy, variable in temper. Sometimes she treated the little Pierre with plenty of food and smothered him with caresses, at another time she stinted him in his diet and scolded him for nothing at all.

Pierre's sensitive soul was wounded by the injustice wherewith he was treated, and he found his only happiness in the society of Geneviève.

The Vidils, without consulting the "Captain," brought up Pierre in the Catholic faith, and sent him to the village school. There from the first he became the butt of the children. Pale, delicate, taciturn, and a dreamer, he consorted with none, and he obtained the nickname of *lou mou*, the Dumb One. Endowed with exceptional intelligence, he rapidly made his way, and in three months had learned to read. Then he begged to be sent to college. The case was embarrassing. It was necessary to consult the Captain. Vidil wrote in two lines to the père Noirot: "The child desires to go to college. Where shall he be put?" The Captain replied even more laconically, "Where you will." The Vidils, at their own cost, sent him to the college at Aubenas;



and by the death of an aunt he was furnished with small means to relieve them and to defray the cost of his education. He was not more happy at Aubenas than he had been at Issarlès. He had no friend. Always alone, he spent his time when out of class in reading. His father held no communication with him, and Aubenas was too far from Issarlès for the Vidils to see him. He tasted of happiness only in the holidays, when he returned to Geneviève. Study was his great consolation. Philosophy and mathematics proved an irresistible attraction to his eager mind. Always first in his class, he surprised the professors, and sometimes alarmed them by his precocity.

At the age of seventeen he entered the Polytechnic School, and was the first to pass in his examination. The régime of this institution suited him. He spent all his spare hours in the library. Pierre read voraciously books treating of the destiny of man and the problems of the universe, even at this early age. He felt assured of being able to enter one of the learned professions, when an event occurred that dashed his hopes. On the eve of All Saints, 1856, he was seated at his examination, when a despatch, "Very urgent," was put into his hand. On opening it he read: "Nîmes, 31st October, 1856. Captain Noirot is dead. Apoplexy. Come at once. Doctor Moulon."

Pierre packed his valise and departed. He found that his father's affairs were in a deplorable condition. He had taken to cards and to drinking. Pierre paid all old Noirot's debts with the money left him by his aunt, but in so doing exhausted that sum. He was consequently unable to return to college, and nothing else was left him but to enlist. He was, however, too young by six

months, and accordingly returned to the Vidils, who received him with a warm welcome. These good people had planned to marry him to Geneviève, but he was too shy to speak, and when he departed left without a word to her to intimate his affection. He was sent to garrison Toulouse. There he proved quiet, orderly, attentive to his duties, respectful to his officers, and courteous to his comrades-in-arms. But he made no friends. One day he received this letter :—

“ISSARLÈS, *May 1st, 1859.*

“MY LITTLE ONE,

“I am obliged to apply to the béate, who is more skilled in writing than myself, to inform you that misfortune has overtaken us. Father is dead—may God rest his soul!—and Geneviève has died of a languor. I am growing old, and am alone. Come and comfort maman Véronique, who loves you, and has none but you left to her in the world.

“V. VIDIL.

“P.S.—You will find in a fold of this letter a thousand francs wherewith to buy a substitute.”

Geneviève was dead—had died of despondency, perhaps because he had not spoken that which would have given her an object for which to live. From that day no smile ever brightened up his features. He returned to Issarlès. The Vidils had done well, and had amassed a little money.

Twenty years passed. In 1879 M. Firmin Boissin, who had been at college at Aubenas with Noirot, went to Issarlès to visit his friend there, the Curé Téraube; and when there learned that his old schoolfellow lived near, but in strange fashion—solitary, speaking to few, spending his time in study and in contemplation, still

wrapped in philosophic pursuits. He had brought away with him from Nîmes some of the doctrinal books that had belonged to his ancestors, but which père Noirot had not read. All his spare cash was expended in the purchase of others.

M. Boissin visited him. Noirot's first words were: "Explain to me, if you can, the contradiction that exists between the foreknowledge of God and free-will in man. How can man be a free agent when his course, his every act is irrevocably predestined?"

The iron of Calvinism had entered into his soul, and was festering it.

M. Boissin and he had many disputes on this perplexing theme. Pierre was ever revolving the question in his mind fruitlessly, making no further progress than does a squirrel in its rotating cage. At last, one day, he exclaimed bitterly, "How well I can understand the saying of Ackermann, 'I have lost all faith—I believe now in nothing but in the existence of evil.' And the evil is the Great Cause—is God."

A few days later Pierre disappeared. Mme. Vidil came in alarm to the presbytère to inform the Curé that she could not find her foster-son, and that she fancied he had fallen into the lake. The alarm was given, the whole village turned out, and he was discovered in the water. The Curé managed to drag him out by the hair of his head. Pierre Noirot was conveyed to his bed. Life was not quite extinct. The Abbé Téraube, stooping over him, said, "Monsieur Noirot, do you recognise me?" The dying man made a sign in the affirmative. "Do you commit yourself into the hands of God, and put your trust in the infinite mercy of Christ?"

At these words the eyes of Noirost opened ; he looked up and said in a whisper : " Je vois—je sais—je crois—je suis désabusé."

The Abbé, laying his hand on the unfortunate man's head, pronounced Absolution. Then kneeling at his side, he recited the Lord's Prayer. At the words, " Thy will be done," the spirit of him, qui n'avait pas de chance, passed away.<sup>1</sup>

Le Monastier is the place whence Robert Louis Stevenson started with his donkey after having spent there a month.

He says :—

" Monastier is notable for the making of lace, for drunkenness, for freedom of language, and for unparalleled political discussion. There are adherents of each of the four French parties—Legitimists, Orleanists, Imperialists, and Republicans—in this little mountain town, and they all hate, loathe, decry, and calumniate each other. Except for business purposes, or to give each other the lie in a tavern brawl, they have laid aside even the civility of speech. 'Tis a mere mountain Poland. In the midst of the Babylon I find myself a rallying point ; everyone was anxious to be kind and helpful to a stranger."

The book was published in 1879. Since then Legitimists, Orleanists, and Imperialists are no more such. They have acquiesced in being good Republicans. Perhaps they have found other themes on which to contend. I do not think that the peasant has much respect for the Republic, but he is content to live quietly under it. As for the deputies he sends to the National Assembly, for them he has no respect at all.

<sup>1</sup> *Révu du Vivarais*, 1893.

They go up needy attorneys and return flush with money.

A peasant said to me one day : " Have you been at a chase and seen the poor brute down, all the hounds tearing at it and fighting each other for scraps of the carcass? That prey is France, and the hounds are the parties."

In 680 Calminius, Count of Auvergne, founded a Benedictine monastery under the red crags of La Moulette that rises to the east of the monastery. The abbey buildings which had suffered in the Wars of Religion were rebuilt in 1754 and are characterless. They have been converted into mairie and corn market. Everywhere in France we see Virgil's *Sic vos non vobis* exemplified. Monks erect monasteries that serve as barracks and schools, asylums and municipal buildings to a future generation.

The abbatial church remains, an edifice of the eleventh century, but with an apse of the fifteenth. The façade is Romanesque with mosaic work of lava, and the arcades of window and doorway are striped in the same manner.

On the south side of the choir is the pretty renaissance chapel of S. Chaffre, the second abbot, who was martyred by the Saracens in 732. This chapel with its painted roof dates from 1543. Names of saints became marvellously altered in the south. Theofred has been transformed into Chaffre, we have seen Evodius become Vozy, and in Hérault we come on St. Agatha disguised under the form of Ste. Chatte, and in Ardèche, Mélangy is rendered Boloni. At the entrance of the town is another church, built of blocks of lava, of the twelfth century, S. Jean, but it has undergone alterations.

From Monastier one can drive to Goudet and thence walk to Arlempdes, distant but three miles, one of the most picturesque sites, with one of the most interesting castles in the Velay. At Goudet itself are the ruined castles of Goudet and Beaufort. At Arlempdes the Loire has cut its way through a mass of lava exposing prismatic columns, and the village is commanded by a castle flanked by round and square towers on a basaltic rock above it, and looking down from a sheer precipice on the Loire that glides below. The summit of the rock was irregular, and the feudal remains were grouped about on the platform equally irregularly. The chapel of Arlempdes is of the twelfth century. The Lac du Bouchet has been already spoken of. It is visited from Cayres. It is not the only object worth seeing in that direction; three-quarters of a mile off the main road from Le Puy to Langonne at Chacornac are caves excavated by the hand of man, that served Mandrin as one of his mints for forged coins. He was a native of S. Etienne; his principal factory of coins was at S. André on the sea coast, but when disturbed there he set up his workshop at Chacornac. Caught repeatedly, he managed to break out of prison again and again, but finally was broken on the wheel in 1755 at the age of forty-one. For some time he used an old castle as his place for coining, first scaring the owner out of it by spectral appearances and keeping up the idea among the peasantry around that it was haunted.

Some commotion was caused in the spiritualistic world in 1903 by stories circulating relative to a haunted mill at Perbet between Le Puy and S. Front. It was occupied by a miller, Joubert, and his wife and two daughters, Marie aged fourteen, and Philomène aged



twelve. On November 27th, 1902, three peasants were returning from market at Lausanne, and had reached the glen of the Aubepine, when they heard startling noises issue from the mill of Perbet accompanied by screams of terror, and the bellowing of the cattle in the stable that was under the same roof. Next moment they saw the miller's wife—he himself was absent at the time—at the door gesticulating and calling for help. The men hastened to the door, and beheld the two girls writhing in convulsions on the floor, the crockery flying about the kitchen, and the furniture performing a waltz. Next moment a volley of stones was discharged at their heads. The men, panic-struck, crossed themselves and departed to talk about what they had seen. Next day and during several that followed crowds visited the ramshackle mill of Perbet, to witness the performances that continued till the clock, the sacred pictures, the window-panes, the crockery, every article the poor dwelling contained, had been reduced to wreckage. The children were conducted to the parish priest, who exorcised them, but all to no purpose. The editor of the Radical *l'Avenir* at Le Puy went to the scene, but saw none of the performances. He contented himself with collecting evidence from eye-witnesses, and convinced himself that the phenomena were due to some supernatural cause.

That the two girls were at the bottom of the *diablerie* admitted of no doubt. It was obvious to all. When they were removed to their uncle's elsewhere, the phenomena ceased at the mill and recommenced in the house into which they had been received.

Nevertheless it occurred to no one, not even to the free-thinking editor, that all was due to clever legerdemain.



A precisely similar exhibition took place in my own neighbourhood many years ago, and was investigated by my father. In this instance there was one girl instead of two who called the performances into existence. My father speedily satisfied himself that they were due to sleight of hand. When a stone flew across the room and smashed a window every eye was turned in the direction taken by the projectile, and the girl obtained thereby an opportunity of providing herself with something fresh to throw. Plates and bowls were made to dance by horsehairs which had been attached to them by dabs of wax.

In the case of the mill of Perbet, it was noticed that the stones flung were *warm*, in itself a significant token that they had been in the hands of the children or secreted about their persons.

The witnesses at Perbet were doubtless all honourable men and disposed to speak the truth, but it is open to question whether there was one among them capable of observing correctly.

An account of the manifestations at the mill at Perbet found its way into the transactions of the Psychical Research Society in London. But one may say without hesitation that the whole "show was run" by Marie and Philomène, and that the only spirits responsible for the disturbance and damage done were the spirits of the two mischievous girls, who ought to have been exorcised by the use of a stick across their backs instead of Latin prayers.

## CHAPTER V

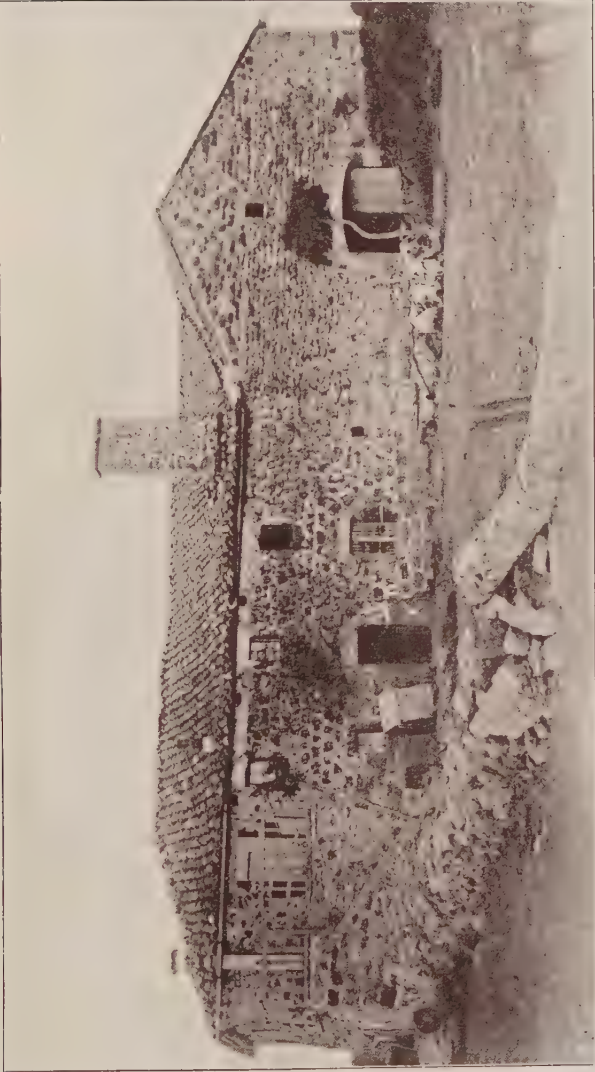
### L'AUBERGE DE PEYRABEILLE

Roman road—The inn—Pierre Martin, his wife, and man—Haussmann at the inn—Number of murders committed never known—Claude Béraud—Assassination of an unknown man—A body boiled—Vincent Boyer—Murder of an old man—Marriage of the youngest daughter—Michel Hugon—Robbery of a pedlar woman—Marriage of the eldest daughter—Murder of Anjolas—Testud and the barrel of bran—Arrest of the Martins and their man—Difficulty of procuring evidence—Execution.

THE story of the Tavern of Peyrabeille is, perhaps, the most ghastly in the annals of crime, but I give it here partly because it has been so overladen and altered by fiction that the facts have disappeared in a cloud of fable; mainly because that story reveals, in a manner nothing else could, some of the characteristics of the Cevenol peasant.

The facts have been gathered from the archives of the Court of Justice at Privas, and published there by M. Paul d'Albigny. But the book is very scarce, long out of print, and I had great difficulty in procuring a copy. It is a book of 495 pages, and I shall have to compress the contents into one chapter.

In the valley of the Ardèche, above Aubenas, at Pont de la Baume, is a Roman milestone now bearing a cross on its summit. Above the road tower the ruins of the castle of Ventadour commanding the valley.



THE TAVERN OF PEYRABEILLE



Both indicate that a great high road of ancient date led this way. In fact, that road was the main artery of communication between France proper and Languedoc. It was up this road that Cæsar pressed in his memorable winter march when he surprised the Arverni.

The great road came down from Clermont to Le Puy, passed over the tableland to near the source of the Ardèche, and followed down that river to Aubenas and thence into the Rhone valley. At almost the highest point, 3,850 feet above the sea, in a bleak spot away from other human habitations, stood a hostelry, Peyrabeille, at which travellers were almost bound to halt to refresh or to pass the night. Faujas de Saint Fond, who was almost the first man to draw attention to the volcanic phenomena of the district, visited Peyrabeille in or about 1770, and he wrote : " There is no habitation so isolated as this inn ; and not a year passes that solitary travellers do not find their safety in this shelter." If he had lived seventy years later he would not have used the same flattering language about it, for after that the family of Martin-Blanc took the tavern ; for twenty-five years it became a murderous den, in which the travellers who lodged there were robbed and sent to their long rest. It was never known how many were there murdered, but it was believed that some sixty had become the victims of Pierre Martin, his wife, and his serving-man, and with what was taken from them the taverner bought up land and extended his possessions on all sides. Not till 1833 was this murderous band convicted and guillotined beside the inn, the scene of their crimes.

Pierre Martin, called also Blanc, with his wife Marie, came first of all as tenant farmer to a man named

Beyraud, in a small habitation near the inn, in or about 1802. They had two daughters, Jeanne, born in 1800, and Marguerite, born after they came to this farm, in 1805. Martin and his wife did well there, by what means we do not know, but he speedily grew so easy in his circumstances that he purchased a site and land of Beyraud, and built a new inn which was completed in 1808.

This building still stands, very slightly altered. It is a long, low structure of granite and lava, with a huge stable, coachhouse, and loft over it adjoining. The front door from the road gave access to the kitchen, dimly lighted by one small hole of a window. In this kitchen was a large fireplace, beside which was the staircase leading to the upper floor, where were the principal bedrooms. On the left a door gave access to the *salle-à-manger*, lighted by two small windows. Beyond this was a washhouse, within it a huge oven in which Martin and his wife cremated the bodies of their victims. It must have been contrived for this purpose when the house was built, for it could serve no other, and since their time it has been destroyed. There was and is still an oven for domestic purposes in the kitchen. Behind this range of apartments was the bedroom of the Martins, husband and wife, adjoining it that of the two daughters and the servant-man Jean Rochette, and in rear of the washhouse a cellar. From the kitchen access was obtained by a door to the coachhouse. The vast stable had a door on to the road, and another at the further end. Above the stable the hayloft was reached by a sloping ascent from the ground. In the upper story of the dwelling-house were four bedrooms opening out of a wide passage in which was a fold-up

cupboard bed, and from which a doorway led into the hayloft.

Pierre Martin, towards the end of his life, had an appearance somewhat patriarchal, with long flowing hair almost white. He had a high colour in his cheeks, and was a short, thick-set man. His forehead was retreating, his mouth firm. In manner he was unctuous, and he affected to be gracious.

His wife Marie, or Marion as commonly called, was a woman of avaricious, violent character, with a strength of will and decision capable of urging on her husband and servant to the worst deeds. Their servant, Jean Rochette, was born in 1785; he was a strongly built man, with auburn hair, large bright eyes, and a face at variance with the ferocity of his character; he was aged forty-eight when executed.

The new inn at Peyrabeille (the Old Stone) was much frequented, lying on the main road from Clermont and Le Puy to Aubenas and Viviers, consequently linked with the Rhone valley as also with Langonne, the great cattle market for the farmers and cattle-breeders of the Margeride; merchants, dealers, colporteurs passed and repassed it, and as habitations were few and inns still fewer, and such as there were of the most wretched description, Peyrabeille could not be gone by without some refreshment being taken there, and in stormy and cold weather the blazing fire kept up in the kitchen out of wood from the forest of Bauzon lured travellers to stay.

Baron Haussmann, in his *Memoirs*, relates a visit made to this inn in 1832. He was then sous-préfet of Yssingeaux:—

“It was six o'clock at night. We decided reluctantly to



stay anywhere for the night, dine, and rest our horses. We halted at a lonely inn at the crossing of two roads on a bleak plateau of most melancholy appearance. Darkness settled down, and the stars did not suffice to show the way. We were reluctantly induced to spend the night there. But it was stifling in the kitchen, which served also as *salle-à-manger* and as *salon*, and to take a breath of air we had opened the door, which the host had already barricaded. A light appeared between the mountains, and we soon became aware that the moon was about to rise. The prospect of escaping from beds of doubtful cleanliness to go elsewhere to rest where less suspicious, made us, late as it was, determine to proceed. We ordered our horses to be saddled, turning a deaf ear to the solicitations of our hosts, whom we urged to draw up our bill. Midnight struck when we arrived, greatly exhausted, at Le Puy."

Eight months later the papers rang with news of the arrest of the host and hostess and servant of the inn for repeated murders of their guests, whose bodies they burned in an oven. Among those who had disappeared was a stout cattle-dealer whom Haussmann and his companion had that night met in the tavern, and with whom they had held discussion.

It is doubtful whether the Martins would have ventured to assassinate two men so well known as Haussmann and his comrade, M. Dumoulin. Possibly, had they stayed the night, it would have saved the life of the cattle-dealer.

The Martins were cautious to treat well and leave unmolested persons of some condition, whose disappearance would rouse inquiry. Moreover, they did not always assassinate their victims in the house, but waylaid them at a distance, and disposed of the bodies in lava chasms or snow-drifts.

Only a fraction of their misdeeds came to light. At their trial such cases alone were brought up against them of which evidence was procurable to convict. Indubitably other persons were involved, sending information of intending lodgers well furnished with money, in advance of the arrival of the guests. Furthermore, André Martin, the nephew, aged thirty-five, was acquitted, although no doubt whatever existed that he had assisted in some of the murders. I will give a summary of the cases proved against the Martins and their man.

In 1808 Europe was the theatre of considerable wars, there was the continental blockade, the war in Spain and Portugal. The difficulties with Rome obliged Napoleon to raise 270,000 conscripts, torn from their families to lay their bones on foreign battlefields. The dislike to conscription caused many young men to retire into hiding away from their homes, and others to desert after enrolment. These were the object of incessant research by the imperial gendarmerie. Among such was a young fellow of twenty called Claude Béraud, son of well-to-do parents near Le Puy, who had already lost one son at Jena, and another was with the army of occupation of Naples, but had not been heard of for long. His parents furnished Claude with money sewn into a leather belt he was to wear next his skin, and bade him hide till the search was over. One winter night, in 1808, this unfortunate young man came to the inn at Peyrabeille and asked to be taken in. Snow was falling, and a storm raging. He was received, and incautiously told his hosts what he was and that he was well supplied with money. They made up for him a roaring fire, and gave him hot spiced wine as he sat

over it. The change from the cold without to the heat within made him drowsy, and as he nodded, Pierre Martin struck the leg of his chair and upset the youth, about whose neck Rochette at once slipped a thong and strangled him. The body was searched, the belt taken off, and the pockets emptied. From the belt 350 francs were taken; from the pockets a peculiarly ornamented knife, which Jean Rochette appropriated, and a watch from which hung a piece of cornelian in the form of a disc. It was by identifying these latter articles twenty-five years later that the parents of Claude first learned his fate.

When he was dead, Pierre Martin and the serving-man carried the body to a distance, leaving a little loose silver in the pocket, and threw it into a snow-drift that filled a ditch. Not till late in the spring was the corpse found, and then it was so disfigured by wolves that identification was impossible, and the money in the pocket led the police to suppose that the death was due to accident.

In the month of July, 1812, Jean Rochette received news through a wagoner who halted at the inn that a stranger, presumedly a merchant and well-to-do, was on his way thither, and might or might not spend the night at Peyrabeille. He was riding on an apple-grey horse with a long tail, and had holsters to his saddle with pistols in them.

At six o'clock in the evening this man arrived, looked at the tavern, and not relishing its appearance was pushing on, when Jeanne, then aged fourteen, ran out, and standing before the horse, entreated the man to make proof of her mother's kitchen; at the same time Rochette came out and joined in persuading him

to alight. The traveller was on his way, he said, to Pradelles, and could not reach it till well on in the night. The merchant allowed himself to be persuaded, and surrendered the horse to the servant, who took it to the stables and at once removed the pistols from their cases. The stranger, whose name never transpired, remained in the inn and dined there; he did not leave till eight o'clock, when night was falling. He had not observed that whilst he was at his meal the two men, Martin and his servant, had disappeared.

After departing, he had gone some way on the road to Pradelles, when from a coppice the host and Rochette leaped out on him, and Martin dealt him a blow with a cudgel on the back of his head which sent him from his horse. Martin then laid hold of the bridle and bade his man finish the stranger. So soon as the traveller was dead he was robbed, despoiled of most of his clothes, and then the body flung across the saddle, the horse led to a great distance, and the corpse thrown into a cleft in the rock, and pieces of granite heaped upon it.

Some days later a couple of poachers after a fox pursued the animal till it took refuge in this very cleft, and in removing the stones to reach it discovered the dead man. The tidings of what had been found was buzzed about, but the police acted in such leisurely fashion that they did not go to the spot till three days after its discovery, and then—the body had disappeared. Pierre Martin had removed and cremated it in his oven. He took the horse, after having docked its tail, to Le Puy to sell it at a fair, but a dealer there seemed to recognise it, and asked inconvenient questions, so Martin hastily left, and he and Rochette killed the beast and buried it.

In the same year a farmer named Brisac, living at no great distance, having sold some hay to Pierre Martin, went one morning very early, as dawn was breaking, to claim his money. On reaching Peyrabeille his surprise was great to see a strong light gleaming from the crevices of the door and the curtained window. He knocked with his stick, but only after some delay did a voice from within ask who he was and what he wanted. He stated his business; the woman Martin opened, and seemed to be somewhat disconcerted and in a very bad temper. The morning was raw, and Brisac went to the hearth, where he saw it piled up into faggots, making a huge blaze about a cauldron suspended in the flames, and the ebullition was so great that the lid of the cauldron was in constant agitation to emit the steam. At the same time, whatever was boiling sent forth a peculiar and disagreeable odour, as from something decayed.

Pierre Martin and his wife were obviously impatient to be rid of their creditor, and Pierre left the room to fetch the money that was due. Brisac seized the opportunity as Marie Martin's back was turned to lift the lid of the cauldron, and to his horror beheld a human hand. As he dropped the lid Pierre re-entered, observed what he had done, and fixing his eyes on Brisac, said to him sternly: "Here is your money. Be off, and take care that not a word as to what you have seen here passes your lips. If you forget my warning, you are a lost man."

Brisac took the money and fled the house, and never again set foot across its threshold. Such, however, is the cowardice of the peasant, his fear of compromising himself, his shyness of having anything to do with the

police, that it was not till the Martins were in prison that he ventured to relate what he had seen, and he appeared in court with his evidence only when it was certain that they could do him no harm. The next case illustrates this timidity even more clearly. I will quote the deposition of the witness textually. It is that of Vincent Boyer, tinner, aged twenty-nine.

“One day, in the winter of 1824, I was going to my family at Aubenas, when I was surprised by the bad weather (the land was covered with snow), and I was forced to stay at the Martins’ inn at Peyrabeille. I saw several persons there, notably an old man also delayed by the bad weather and forced to pass the night there. Martin’s wife having invited me to draw near to the fire, entered into conversation with me, and questioned me on my gains in my trade, and as to how much money I had with me. She told me that there was a band of robbers in the neighbourhood, and she asked me what I would do if attacked by them. ‘I would give up to them the thirty sous I have with me and be off.’ ‘But,’ said she, ‘supposing that they were disposed to kill another man and let you alone, what would you do?’ ‘I would defend him at the peril of my life if I saw there was a chance of saving him. If not, I would let be.’ ‘Are you a heavy sleeper?’ ‘Very. When once asleep you might remove the house without awaking me.’

“This strange questioning frightened me; I saw clearly enough into what company I had got. However, I did my best to disguise my suspicions. After having catechised me, the woman Martin went to the old man and asked him the cause of his journey. He replied without mistrust that he had sold a cow and was taking the money back with him. This lack of reticence further alarmed me.

“Bed-time arrived. The people of the house told us plainly enough to go to our respective chambers aloft. Then



only did some suspicion cross the mind of the old man, and he asked to share the same room with me, but this was peremptorily refused.

“They led us to our separate bedrooms at some little distance apart. I heard the old man make some demur as to his, and a voice replied: ‘Manage as you will. There is no other room for you.’ Then I heard the door of his chamber shut, and whoever had led him to his room descended. One of the girls had conducted me to my chamber, and she recommended me not to leave my door open, speaking in a tone that expressed an order.

“As soon as the girl Martin had left I examined my bed, and was horrified to find on the bolster splashes of blood as big as the bottom of a pail. I went to bed more dead than alive. At the end of about an hour some one entered my room, thinking that I was asleep—I made good pretence that I was so—and searched my pockets, and finding in them no more than the thirty sous, left them there and descended again.

“Two or three hours later I heard strokes at the old man’s door, and a voice call, ‘Get up, it is time.’ There was, however, no response. Then those who had made this noise went back below, but returned in half an hour. They knocked again at the door, repeating the words as before. But seeing that the stranger persisted in refusing to reply, they burst in the door. Immediately I heard cries of ‘Help! Help!’ But soon the victim uttered no more articulate cries, but such as I can only liken to the squeals of a pig that is being killed. During the accomplishment of the crime—that is to say, whilst the unhappy man was uttering these cries of distress—the two Martin girls, aged twenty-eight and thirty, were keeping guard at my door, laughing in fits and singing. I could compare them only to demons from hell.

“Next morning I rose late, to give the scoundrels time to conceal their crime, and by this means make it safer for myself. The woman Martin asked me how I had slept and if I had

heard anything. I said that I had been sound asleep all night. I was so frightened, that when I had got a hundred paces from the house I ran the rest of my way as hard as my legs could carry me."

This self-revelation of abject cowardice and meanness in a young man drew from the judges no comment. It was in the nature of the peasant to be such, and comment would be useless. Only they remarked on Boyer having said nothing of what had occurred to the police or any one else for fourteen years. But this also was characteristic.

By means of repeated crimes Pierre Martin had amassed a good deal of money. He bought more land to round off his property, also another house, at a few paces from his own. He was also able to announce that he would give a handsome *dot* with each of his daughters. This brought a suitor, Philemon Pertuis, son of a well-to-do farmer, above the Martins in position, to ask the hand of Marguerite. They were married, and installed in the house that Pierre had bought. Young Pertuis was a mild, inoffensive man. There is no evidence that he took any part in the crimes, but he became aware of them, and cautioned his father-in-law to be more circumspect; and finally, in 1830, four years after his marriage, quitted the house and went to a distance so as to avoid implication in the misdeeds of the old man and his wife. He also said nothing to the police or to any one else of what he knew or suspected.

In 1826, just two months after the marriage, another crime was attempted, that came to light later.

A farmer, named Michel Hugon, was at the fair at Jaujac, where he sold a drove of young bullocks. He was annoyed at being followed and watched by a little

hunchback named Pannard, who endeavoured to get into conversation with him and learn where he intended to pass the night on his way home to Pradelles. He curtly informed him that he would sleep at the house of a friend at Mayres.

Hugon was on his way home when he was passed by Pannard riding a mountain pony, and going the same way as himself. In fact, the hunchback was on the road to Peyrabeille to announce to the Martins that some good game was coming to their net. After sleeping at Mayres, Hugon pursued his journey on the following morning, and halted at the inn of the Martins to breakfast, but saw none there save the women. When about to leave, Marie Martin strongly advised him to take a short cut which she pointed out, and which would save him over a mile. Without suspicion he followed her directions, and had gone some way, when out of the bushes leaped Pierre Martin and Jean Rochette, armed with picks; and the former with his weapon dealt a blow at Hugon that cut his head open and wounded his back, but happily failed to stun him or split his skull. The farmer at once whirled his cudgel and struck Martin under the knee with such force as to bring him to the ground. Rochette, who was behind, yelled to his master, "Strike on! strike on!" But Pierre was unable to rise for a moment, and Hugon took to his heels and ran before Jean could deal him another blow. Pierre got up now, and he and Rochette pursued the farmer, who fled and did not draw breath till he reached the high road on which were passengers, and where he felt himself safe. He also breathed not a word of his adventure and escape till the Martins were under lock and key. Not long after this Pannard was arrested on a



MAYRES



charge of theft and imprisoned for six months. In gaol he opened his mouth and complained to his fellow-prisoners that he had helped the innkeeper at Peyrabeille to do a good stroke of business, and that he had not been paid for his assistance ; for he could not believe that Hugon had escaped with his money. This got spoken of. Moreover, ugly rumours began to circulate relative to the tavern, but no one was willing to speak out and lay a definite charge against the Martins.

The attempt on Hugon was in May. In June of the same year a pedlar-woman, named Catherine Vercasson, on a very hot day, came to the inn and showed her wares to the Martin girls and their mother, in the hopes that they would purchase. They bought a few trifles, and then Catherine locked her box with a key that she carried suspended to her belt. As she was hot and tired, she asked leave to lie down on a bed for a rest. This was readily accorded. She was given a tumbler of drugged wine, and led to one of the upper rooms, where she was soon fast asleep. As she lay unconscious Jeanne Martin possessed herself of the key, opened the box, and took from it several articles of jewellery, and the mother relieved the pedlar's purse of some of its contents.

Catherine Vercasson woke after a long sleep and unsuspectingly went on her way, but had not gone far before she sat down to count her money, when to her alarm she found that she had been robbed of two louis d'or. She went into the nearest village to sell more of her goods, and, on opening her box, found that that also had been rifled. She was now positive that she had been pillaged at Peyrabeille. She confided her distress to the innkeeper at Lanarce, the village where she was.



He shrugged his shoulders and bade her put a good face on it, and not venture back to reclaim the money and goods. But Catherine was not disposed to accept her losses so easily, and with great difficulty she induced two young men to accompany her to Peyrabeille. They went with her, but no persuasion would induce them to enter the house. The determined woman went in and charged the mother and daughters with the theft, which they stoutly denied. "I will not leave till I receive my money and goods," said she. The women exchanged glances, and the mother bade one of her daughters go out and fetch Pierre and the servant. The girl returned in haste to say that two men were watching the house, but hiding their faces so as not to be recognised. Under these circumstances the three women deemed it expedient to restore the major part of what they had taken, and to pretend that the whole was a practical joke. The story got wind, and increased the suspicion with which the Martins were regarded.

In 1831, the eldest of the daughters was married to a man named Deleyrolles, he also occupying a better social position than the Martins; he was drawn to ask for her by the rich *dot* that went with her, and he took his wife with him to Vans.

One would have supposed that now all reason for amassing money by crime was taken away. The Martins had no more children for whom to save, and they were very comfortably off themselves. But avarice is insatiable.

Other crimes and attempted crimes I will pass over, to come to the last which led to the arrest of the Martins and their man.

In October, 1831, an old man of seventy-two, named

Anjolras, a relative of Pierre Martin, had sold to him a cow at the fair at S. Cirques, and as he wanted his money asked Martin to pay for it at once. The taverner said he had not the sum by him, but invited Anjolras to accompany him to Peyrabeille, where he would give him what was owed. The old man consented, and went with his kinsman to the fatal inn, which they reached at nightfall.

There were in the house at the time André, the nephew of Pierre Martin, and a girl named Marie Arnaud, the betrothed of André, engaged there at needlework, a pale, serious-faced girl, whose part in what follows is difficult to discover. There was also in the house at the time a beggar named Laurent Chaze, who had asked to be taken in for the night. Pierre Martin, as soon as he entered, demanded roughly what this fellow wanted, and when Chaze stated his requirements he was bidden be off, there was no bed at his disposal. Chaze went forth into the dark, walked some way along the road, then bethought himself of the hayloft, stole back, and finding the loft door unbarred went in and concealed himself in a corner beneath the hay. When bedtime arrived, under some excuse the host induced Anjolras to sleep in the loft and not in one of the bedrooms, and the beggar heard Martin bring his kinsman in and point out a place where he could lie, near the door of communication with the house. About an hour later Chaze saw Jean Rochette with a lamp enter and examine Anjolras to ascertain if he were asleep. Then he descended, but returned with Marie Martin, she carrying a large iron ladle full of scalding soup. Having satisfied themselves that the old man was sound, she said to Jean Rochette, "Strike!"

and he brought a hammer down on the sleeper's head. As Anjolras started and opened his mouth she threw the scalding contents of the ladle into it. The old man fell. "Strike again," said the woman, "he is not dead yet." Jean obeyed till the skull was beaten in.

Before dawn the beggar had fled the scene.

The disappearance of Anjolras caused a commotion, and search was made for him in all directions. It was heard that he had been last seen along with Pierre Martin on his way to Peyrabeille.

The murder had been committed on the night of the 12th October. On the 25th, thirteen days after, the authorities began to bestir themselves, and as every trace pointed to the inn, the Mayor of Lanarce, accompanied by a party of young men, went to Peyrabeille to institute inquiries. On entering the kitchen, Marie Martin informed him that the Juge de Paix of Coucourn was already there in the parlour, and would speak with him. No one knew what passed between these magistrates, but presently the mayor came out and said to his attendants: "Gentlemen, you may depart, there is nothing to be done"; and, in fact, nothing was done. No search was made; some politenesses passed between the two officials and the hostess, and they retired with bows. Yet the corpse, all the while, was within a few yards of the house. It was discovered in a startling manner.

Philemon Pertuis, son-in-law of the Martins, who had left the house in which he had been for a few years at Peyrabeille, had retained the little farm about it, and employed the sheds and stable and cellars for his crops, etc.

One day he sent his servant, Jean Testud, with a

tumbril to fetch away his potatoes that were in the cellar. Testud went in with a lamp and saw in a corner a barrel of bran. He was aware of an unpleasant smell in the cellar, which he could not explain. On one of his journeys the lamp went out, and he returned to grope for it. In so doing he put his hand into the barrel and encountered the cold remains of a human body. Frozen with horror, he staggered to the inn, sank in a chair, and said he was ill, and must go home to his parents at Banne.

Pierre Martin and his wife were uneasy. They went to the cellar and found there the lamp of Testud, and at once saw that the corpse must be removed. This was done during the night on the back of a mule, and was conveyed to a precipice at Lespéron and flung over it, so as to give an idea that Anjolras had fallen accidentally.

The body was discovered on October 26th, was identified and examined, and it was soon seen that this was no case of an accidental fall, but of murder. On November 1st, Martin and his wife and his nephew André, and after that Jean Rochette, were arrested, but were not brought to trial for three years, as the prosecution met with extraordinary difficulty in getting together evidence against them, so timorous were the peasants, so afraid of appearing in court and being subjected to cross-questioning, and of incurring the resentment of the relatives of the Martins, who were numerous. The two daughters were not arrested. Nothing could be wrung from the girl Marie Arnaud, who preserved throughout remarkable self-possession and self-restraint. André, as already said, was acquitted, but Pierre and his wife and Jean Rochette were guillotined close to the inn on October 2nd, 1833.

Pierre Martin affected to be penitent, made loud professions of remorse. Rochette was sullenly penitent, but Marion literally kicked the prison chaplain out of the cart in which he purposed attending her to the gallows, was resentful and hardened to the last, and when, on the scaffold, another priest held up the crucifix before her eyes as she was being bound to be placed under the fatal knife, she turned away her face from it with a scowl.

Vast crowds attended the execution, and when the bloody scene was over and the scaffold removed, the crowd spent the rest of the day till late into the night dancing over the spot where the blood had flowed, to the strains of a piper, whilst the old folks got fuddled over the liquor from the cellar of the inn, sold to them by the nearest relatives of the Martins, who had inherited it through the execution a few hours previously. To Peyrabeille may be applied the words of Jules Claretie, relative to Paris after the Terror: "Il y avait encore dans Paris une odeur de sang, et Paris cependant s'amusait ; folle de joie."









A GROUP OF LACEMAKERS

## CHAPTER VI

### LES BOUTIÈRES

Geological formation—Characteristics of the Boutières and of the people—S. Peray and its wine—Castle of Crussol—Valley of the Erioux—A masterpiece of engineering—La Voute—Its decay—The chapel of the castle—Vernoux, the Geneva of the Huguenots—The Momiens—Party feeling—Massacre of S. Bartholomew—La Pourasse—The Cachard family—The drummer—Gorge of the Dunnière—La Tourette—Chalençon—Diana of Poitiers—Le Cheylard.

LES BOUTIÈRES have already had some sentences devoted to them. They differ geologically, and consequently in scenery, altogether from the high range of volcanic peaks of the mountains of the Vivarais below Privas. They are composed of granite and gneiss, and continue the Cevennes chain northwards. There are among them no craters, no floods of crystallised lava. Their heights are not extraordinary; they throw out long lateral spurs towards the Rhone. The scenery is tamer than in any other part of the Cevennes; that portion from Annonay to S. Etienne is given up to factories, which makes the country people prosperous but the country unattractive.

But from Annonay south to Privas there is pleasant if not fine scenery, and it is very rarely visited.

“It is,” says Dr. Francus (A. Mazon), “a land that has a stamp of its own; its mountains, its agriculture, its customs, even its religion are peculiar to it. A land of steep slopes,

boisterous rivers, rude summits, with pines above and chestnut trees below, with Biblical types of men, bullet-headed, and with brains not altogether like other men's brains. Nature herself puts on a severe countenance; the woods look like gloomy conspirators, the wind seems to chant psalms, and with a little imagination it is possible to fancy that one hears a far-off echo of some Assembly of the Desert that Time has forgotten to sweep away in its onward march."

Looking westward from Valence is seen the little town of S. Peray, and towering above it the ruined castle of Crussol on a limestone cliff.

S. Peray is famous, with a limited fame, for its sparkling wine.

The white wine of S. Peray always had a certain celebrity. The wine merchants of Burgundy and Champagne, seeing that very good juice of the grape was to be had there cheap, bought it up and sold it as their own *crus*, or else doctored it. They purchased whole vintages at the time of the gathering in and crushing of the grape, and by means of the navigation of the Rhone and Saône, were able to bring them into the heart of France.

But after a while the owners of the vineyards of S. Peray saw their way to selling direct to the consumer. In 1798 one of them discovered the secret how to make the wine effervesce, and he set to work to produce sparkling S. Peray, which soon obtained great favour.

The phylloxera came in 1874 and devastated the vineyards. But they have been replanted with stocks from America, grafted with the indigenous vine, and these are strong and flourishing, and yield abundantly, the wine somewhat coarse at first, but mellowing as

the vine becomes more and more accustomed to the soil.

The huge crag surmounted by the ruins of the castle of Crussol is extensively quarried. The stone is of a fawn colour, and receives a polish. The huge castle, with its rifted donjon called the Horns of Crussol, at one time contained a town within its enclosure. Now, all is ruin.

The family of Crussol was not of much note till Louis de Crussol gained the favour of Louis XI., and was appointed governor of Dauphiné. The son married the heiress of Uzès, and with her the title of viscount passed to their son Charles, whose son Antoine was created Duke of Uzès. The ruined castle belongs still to the Uzès family.

The castle was destroyed by Richelieu in 1623.

In my book, *In Troubadour Land*, I have told the story of how the Uzès race sprang from a strolling company of three travelling comedian brothers, and so will not here repeat it. On a terrace above the Miolan that enters the Rhone at S. Peray is the castle of Beau-regard, formerly a State prison, now a café restaurant with a speciality in tripe. So the whirligig of Time brings about its revenges.

The most interesting excursion among the Boutières is up the valley of the Erioux, that takes its rise above S. Agrève. It is a capricious river, at one time a small stream, at another a boiling torrent. In the great flood of 1876 it rose forty feet, and rolled down three times the amount of water that does the Seine at Paris. It brings with it from the granite particles of gold, but not in sufficient amount to make it worth while searching for the precious metal.

The line up the valley is a masterpiece of engineering; in places it is carried in cornice along the face of the gorge, now cut out of the rock, and now on a terrace built up on arches. The river enters the Rhone a couple of miles above La Voute, but the junction of the line to Le Cheylard is at this place. La Voute sur Rhone is an ancient town planted at the foot of and scrambling up a rock crowned with the ruins of a castle of the great family of Ventadour. The old town, with its tortuous streets, its venerable but crumbling houses, its steep, ladder-like ascent, is almost deserted, life has run down and settled in modern houses at the foot. But even the new town is death-struck.

The iron mines which made the place prosperous, and in 1870 yielded 60,000 tons of ore, produced but 12,683 tons in 1891, and in the following year only 520; and now, none. Ruin has fallen on La Voute, and it is doubtful if it will ever recover. In the old castle of the Ventadours was set up the bureau of the company that worked the mines. Now the offices are ruinous and deserted, like the halls and towers of the feudal princes.

The fortress was begun in 1319, and enlarged and made splendid in 1582. Ichabod! Its glory is departed. The beautiful Renaissance chapel with its marbles and sculpture is crumbling away. The chapel is vaulted with delicate ribs, and against the walls are carved a Resurrection and statues of the Duke and Duchess of Ventadour. But all, sculptured capitals of pilasters, dainty cornices, figures, have suffered under the hammers of the Revolutionary fanatics.

In the valley of Erioux, where it opens out, vineyards have been staged up the mountain sides, in narrow



walled terraces, with infinite labour, and where there are not vines there are chestnuts and cherry trees. At S. Fortunat, the Dunière enters the Erioux, and hence a road leads to Vernoux, the Geneva of the Protestants of Upper Ardèche. It is mainly occupied by descendants of the Huguenots, but there are Catholics as well, living in a separate quarter. The Protestants are much divided among themselves. One sect is that of the Momiens, whose head-quarters are S. Agrève and Vernoux. They represent the original Huguenots far more truly than those who call themselves Evangelicals, for these latter have lapsed into Freethought, Indifference, Agnosticism, and the best are Deists. The Momiens do not attend the "Temples Protestants," but hold their assemblies in the open air, in fact have camp meetings. Every one brings his provisions with him; they have exercises of prayer, psalm-singing, and exhortation, and then all dine peaceably under the chestnut trees. They come into town only on Sundays and market-days, and do not frequent the public-houses. They have the character of being scrupulously honest.

Many of the Evangelicals never attend public worship. Out of eleven thousand inhabitants of Vernoux, about eight thousand are Protestants; they are able, accordingly, to engross all the offices and determine the elections. Conversions one way or the other are most rare, perhaps four or five in thirty years, and these only on account of marriages. The Protestant young men are desirous of getting Catholic wives, as the girls of this latter confession have a better moral character—being more carefully looked after by the clergy and sisters than are the others; but the curés in every way



oppose mixed marriages, which is a mistake, for no more effective missionary can be found than a God-fearing, consistent wife.

Unhappily party feeling runs strong. An old curé of Vernoux named Chifflet, with the help of a M. Demars, who was a large contributor, founded a hospital, and when it was complete handed it over to the town for general use without regard to denomination. At once the town council elected a governing board, from which it excluded the principal donor, M. Demars, because he was a Catholic, and struck off the name of M. Lanthois, the only Protestant in the place who had given a sou towards the hospital.

So when the Calvinist temple wanted rebuilding a rate was imposed on all the citizens, and the Catholics had to contribute as well as the Evangelicals. But when the Catholics desired to erect a church for themselves a rate was refused. If the proportions had been the other way on, without a doubt the Catholics would have acted with precisely the same intolerance.

As a curé said to me the other day: "Live and let live is not a principle we understand in France, and never have. We who are bullied to-day, if we get the upper hand to-morrow would bully in our turn."

Charles IX. could not have made a more grateful present to French Protestantism than the massacre of S. Bartholomew. It is to them a perpetual and cherished grievance. They would not be without it any more than a professional mendicant would be without his sore. The massacre is introduced into every sermon, alluded to in every contingency, thrown in the face of a Catholic in every dispute, flourished even at a wedding-breakfast.

A Calvinist infant is brought up on it. It is the first historic fact he has to acquire, and often when grown to man's estate is the only historic fact that he remembers. The massacre has been so rubbed into the minds of the Evangelicals that they cannot look in the face of their fellow-citizens of the other persuasion except through blood-red glass.

This temper sometimes produces vexatious results. In a village in the Boutières, where the meeting-house happened to possess a bell, one Sunday an old woman went to sleep during the discourse, and did not wake when the congregation dispersed; and being overlooked, was locked in. When she roused from her slumber, she went to the bell-rope and pulled long and hard. At the sound of the tocsin all the Protestants within hearing were roused. Now at last the long-expected massacre was coming off. Women and children fled to the woods. The men barricaded their houses, loaded their rifles, and prepared to sell their lives dearly. The bell pealed on, every scrap of courage save among the most heroic sank to their stocking-soles, when the old woman, having failed to summon relief, took to relieving herself from her situation by flinging the rope out of a window and crawling down it. *Parturiunt montes nascetur ridiculus mus.*

In 1885, when at the election for the Legislature the Conservative list passed in its entirety, the Protestants of Les Boutières were so impressed with the revival of Catholic hopes and their successes that one of these panics fell on them. Indeed, they have a name for such, *la pourasse*.

Before the outbreak of the Revolution there were many little nobles and landed gentry in the country

whose châteaux are now in ruins or turned into farm-houses. They lived sociably, giving dances, meeting for shooting-parties or games of tennis.

One of these was the Monsieur de Cachard. On June 24th, 1786, he gave a dance to his neighbours, but found a difficulty in getting musicians. He applied to the garrison at Valence, and was offered the drummer of the regiment, who could also play the fife, and courteously he extended the invitation to any of the officers who would care to take a part in the entertainment. A young lieutenant accepted, his name was Napoleon Bonaparte, and he brought with him the drummer, Victor Beausoleil. Towards the conclusion of the ball, M. de Cachard went to the musician and asked how he could repay his services. "Only by letting me have a dance with mademoiselle your daughter." "By all means," replied the master of the house, and Beausoleil led out the young lady.

The Revolution came. The family of Cachard was dispersed; some were guillotined, some emigrated. At the Restoration, the head of the family went to Paris to solicit the restitution of some of the confiscated and sold estates. He solicited an audience with Marshal Victor, Duke of Belluno, minister of war. No sooner was he introduced, than the Duke started forward, grasped his hand and said: "Monsieur! we have not met since Midsummer Day, 1786, when I piped, and had the honour to dance with mademoiselle." The minister was, in fact, the drummer from Valence. He interested himself in the case and obtained for M. de Cachard the recovery of the ancient château and a portion of his lands. The Duke was wont to joke over his title. "As a drummer-boy I was Beausoleil. I have lost, not

gained, by becoming a duke, for now I am only Belluno (Belle Lune)."

The river Dunière sweeps past Vernoux, and the road from S. Fortunat to this town presents a succession of striking scenes. The gorge through which the Dunière enters the Erioux has precipitous sides, above which the mountains rise bare, or but meagrely dotted with evergreen oaks, that grow low and stunted. Below rolls, leaps, and foams the torrent. In the contracted throat of Pontpierre, after the bursting of storms in the Cevennes, the water rises and writhes to escape, and issues from it into the valley of the Erioux as from a spout. The road follows the edge of the chasm as far as Roumézoux, after which the hills fall back and allow of cultivation. Then again they contract, but the gorge is less savage, and is commanded on the left bank by one of the noblest ruins in the Vivarais. The Dunière flowing from the east receives a torrent descending from the north, and at this point rises a mighty crag on the top of which two lofty towers stand out sharply against the sky. They belong to the castle of La Tourette, close to Vernoux. According to popular tradition it was built by the Saracens; it was the feudal centre of the district and occupied by a Marquess de La Tourette. The castle was intact till the Revolution, and was a scene of much hospitality extended to the bourgeoisie of Vernoux, who danced in the great hall, hung with stamped and gilded leather. At the Revolution the castle was unroofed and ruin set in rapidly, as every one who wanted to build a pigsty or a factory used its walls as a quarry. Happily of late years the family of La Tourette, that has its residence at Tournon, has repurchased the eagle nest of its ancestors and has put

a stop to the destruction. From its isolated rock the castle was connected by a drawbridge with a terrace, beyond which was the farm, a building of the sixteenth century, that had not been molested. The terrace is sustained by a wall and was originally planted with trees, and must have been a delightful walk, suspended above the precipice, and from which one could look down on the birds of prey darting and fluttering in the depths, and which also had their habitations in these rocks.

In 1671, the Marquess de La Tourette bought the barony of Chalençon to the south of Vernoux. This was at one time one of the most powerful baronies in the country. It extended its jurisdiction over eighty parishes, all of which were bound to furnish men-at-arms when summoned to do so by the Seigneur of Chalençon.

In 1523, Jean de Poitiers, father of the famous Diana, Baron of Chalençon, was condemned to death for felony. But the beauty and the tears of his daughter saved his life; and after her father's death Diana became Baroness Chalençon and Privas. She seems never to have set foot in either. This left-handed queen died in 1566, and bequeathed the barony to the youngest of her daughters, Louise, who had married in 1546 Claude de Lorraine, Duc d'Aumale. In the square of Chalençon may be seen a gigantic elm, a *Sully*, one of the trees planted in all parishes on the conversion of Henry IV. The old castle was flanked by three towers, but was almost totally destroyed. It has been reconstructed.

The railway from S. Fortunat, where we abandoned it, deserves to be followed to its terminus at Le Cheylard, as it runs through some of the finest scenery in the Boutières to the cone of Mézenc, to which the chain hitches

itself on. Moreover, it has been finely engineered the whole way. But Le Cheylard itself is not a place of interest, being a modern manufacturing town, created by Lyons speculators calculating on the cheapness and abundance of labour in that part, where agriculture is hampered by the elevation. The château of La Mothe is picturesque, but has had the tops of its towers knocked off and rehatted.

Le Cheylard may be employed as quarters for a visit to Mézenc and the Gerbier de Jonc, if these have not been made an object of pilgrimage from Le Puy, and from this side they present a better appearance than from the other.





## CHAPTER VII

### THE VOLCANOES OF THE VIVARAIS

Attraction of cohesion—Vals—Aubenas—Factory girls—Anomalies in the department—View from the terrace—When the volcanoes ceased to erupt—The castle—The Ornano family—The poisoning of the Marshal—Attractions of Vals—Intermittent spring—Castle of Boulogne—The Lestranges—Antraigues—The Count—Cascades—The Marquesses—Fête of S. Roch—The Coupe d'Aizac—Castle of Ventadour—Pretended Jewish origin of the family of Levis—Valley of the Lignon—Jaujac—The Coupe—The Gravenne—Castle of Pourcheirolles—The Flandrins—Bourzet—Good Friday there—Prismatic basalt—Montpezat—Le Pal—Huge crater—Suc de Bauzon—Thueyts—Pavé des Géants—The royal ladder—Mayres—The great eagle—What medieval men thought about basalt—First discovery of the Vivarais mountains being volcanoes.

THE attraction of cohesion is one of the mightiest and most active forces in nature. It went towards the formation out of molecules of the terrestrial globe, it acts in the accumulation of large fortunes in the hands of millionaires, and it draws together great masses of human beings to one spot. Even when the heat of summer and the dispersion of schools scatter them to the north and south, east and west, out of cities, they draw together and coagulate in knots. But why one of these centres of concentration should be Vals and not Aubenas is to me a puzzle. Why when engaging a lodging should one select the cellar instead of an upper suite of apartments?



THE VIVARAIS CHAIN



Vals-les-Bains lies in a hole shut in between steep hills, it commands no view, it trails like an ugly worm along the bank of a petty stream; whereas Aubenas, hard by, accessible by electric tram, is throned on a height, sits as a queen on a platform of rock, and commands such a prospect as is worth going thither from England to see if that were its only attraction.

Are there good hotels in Vals? So there are in Aubenas. Shops? As good in both. Electric illumination, telegraph and telephone? Each is similarly supplied. That which draws a crowd in the season to Vals is the baths. But the baths are a mere excuse. The fashion has set in and the crowd follow the fashion.

The river Ardèche, after having ploughed its way through beds of basaltic lava, runs between the prismatic columns as though sweeping through a forest of petrified bulrushes. It emerges above Aubenas into a broad, luxuriant, and well-peopled valley, where white walls smile and glass windows wink in the sun as far down as the eye can reach, and as far up the sides of the hills as folk choose to climb to their homes.

Moreover, factories stretch their long roofs below the rock of Aubenas and throw up their smoke, but without disfigurement to the scene or vitiation of the limpid air.

Come to Aubenas from the junction at Vogué on a Sunday evening, and you will see something of merry girl-life. The factory-hands from the lower country are returning from their homes to resume their work on Monday morning. They swarm into every carriage, crowding in at every station, each with a basket in one hand and a sack over the shoulder or under the arm. All are chattering, laughing; one wiping away a tear

either because she is suffering from toothache or heartache at parting with her intended. But neither ache is very enduring. Before the train has gone a thousand metres, she is laughing and chirping like the rest. When settled into their seats they open their baskets to show each other the posies of flowers they are taking to Aubenas to brighten the poor little attic bedrooms and diffuse through them a fragrance and memory of home. But the sacks—what do they contain? As I helped some of the girls to heave these into the carriage and stow them under the seats or into the shelf above, I could guess from the feel, and see when the sack mouth gaped and discharged some of its contents. It holds their factory clothing washed by their mothers—aprons, bibs, and among them huge loaves of bread and greasy sausages, these latter wrapped round with a newspaper that has transferred its information reversed on to the skin of the *saucisson*.

These mill-hands do not wear the pretty scarlet or blue handkerchief over the head that adorns the Lancashire and Yorkshire factory girl, the theme of one of our most charming folk-songs.

“Why wear you that kerchief tied over your head?  
'Tis the country girls' fashion, kind sir, then she said;  
And the fashion young maidens will always be in,  
So I wear a blue kerchief tied under the chin.

Why wear a *blue* kerchief, sweet maiden? I said.  
Because the blue colour is not one to fade.  
As a sailor's blue jacket who fights for the king,  
So's my bonny blue kerchief tied under the chin.”

These Vivarais girls wear no costume. There is not much beauty among them; but their honest faces are good to look on. The glorious southern sun has

penetrated to their hearts and shines back on you from their merry eyes.

They do not leave the train at the Aubenas station, but go on to the next, the group of factories at the foot of the hill at the head of the basin, between the town and the opening of the Valley of Vals.

From the station is a long ascent to the town ; there is a gradual inclined road for carriages, and a short, steep climb for foot travellers.

Aubenas is, next to Annonay, the most important town in the Vivarais ; neither is the seat of the préfet, nor of the bishop, nor of a university.

The department of Ardèche has been treated somewhat perversely in this respect. Its capital is Privas, of difficult access at the extremity of a branch line served by trains that run forward and back, advance and retreat again to pick up or to discharge luggage trucks, and that is ignorant of any other train than an *omnibus*.

The cathedral city is at one end of the department at its extreme verge, at Viviers, one of the deadeat of dead cities, with a population of three thousand. The lycée is near the other end of the department, also at its eastern limit, with only a streak of water between it and Drôme. That is Tournon, which has indeed a population of a little over five thousand, whereas in Annonay it is seventeen thousand, and in Aubenas above eight thousand. Moreover, Aubenas is not even a *chef-lieu d'arrondissement*, which Largentière is, numbering 2,780.

Aubenas stands 930 feet above the sea. You can breathe there ; you stifle at Vals. And what a prospect it commands ! To the west the wild heights of the



mountains of the Vivarais, volcanoes that have burst through the rocks, and flung them aloft in rents that reveal to this day the agony through which the earth passed when fire and fury broke forth. To the north the Coiron, a chain of huge lava beds overlying other rocks, that have given way and left the chain a mighty hacked and battered saw standing up against the sky. A look at a geological map of the Vivarais shows the Plutonic deposits extended like the fingers of a hand or the nerves of a vine-leaf over the mountain tops.

When did these explosions cease? Some of the deposits are of great age, others are comparatively recent. As we have seen, the bones of men have been found under the lavas of Mont Denise, near Le Puy. Nothing of this kind has been so far discovered in the Vivarais, only the skeletons of the mastodon. But there is historic evidence that leads us to suspect that the last expiring throe was in A.D. 468. S. Mamertus, Bishop of Vienne, instituted Rogation processions, and drew up a litany for use there, because the people were panic-stricken by the earthquakes, by a glare of light in the sky and the falling of ashes, and by loud explosions that were heard. The stags, the wolves even, fled from the Cevennes and took refuge in the towns, laying aside their instinctive fear of men.

Aubenas was erected about a large castle that was begun in the twelfth century and completed in the sixteenth by the Ornano family. It afterwards passed into the possession of the Count of Vogué, who held it till the Revolution. It has happily not been destroyed, and now serves as mairie, tribunal of commerce, etc. The façade is imposing, flanked by round towers and commanded by a square keep. The whole was roofed

with glazed brown and yellow tiles. A portion was ripped by a storm and has been repaired with green tiles, and the effect is singular, as if a huge pot of green paint had been spilled over the roof.

The church, with a vulgar modern west-front, is wholly modernised within, but without, where not built into houses, shows that the original church was of the fourteenth century. The buttresses were round turrets that have been deprived of their tops. In a chapel of the church is the monument in black marble of the Marshal Ornano, raised by his wife the Duchess. It was mutilated at the Revolution.

The Ornano family was that of the Sovereign Counts of Corsica, descended from Ugo Colonna whom Leo III. charged with the expulsion of the Saracens from that isle. He was invested with the title of Count by Charlemagne, and he obtained at the same time sovereign rights.

The Genoese, by making themselves masters of Corsica, drove out the Ornanos, and Sanpietro, who went into the service of France, was engaged all his life in fighting the Genoese; and he succeeded in gaining the whole island for France, but Henry II. basely restored it to the Genoese. His son, Alphonso d'Ornano, born in 1548, died in 1610. He fought the Genoese like his father, and with equal success, and was created Marshal of France. His son, Jean Baptiste, was born in 1583, and died in 1626. He was brought up at the Court and was appointed governor of Pont-Esprit, and he was there when tidings reached him of the assassination of Henry IV. He married the Countess of Montlaure, an heiress. Under De Luynes he was appointed tutor to the Duke of Orléans, the King's brother, and governor

for the King in Normandy. The favour in which he was held raised him many enemies, and they persuaded Louis XIII. to withdraw his offices from him, and bid him retire to his estates. Ornano at once demanded admittance to the young King, and placed his person at his disposal. Let him be sent to prison, he urged, for he was resolved not to go back into Languedoc with the stigma of disgrace upon him. This bold conduct confounded his foes, and satisfied the King as to his innocence. His former offices were restored to him, and he was named Marshal of France. But Ornano was a bad courtier. He refused to go cap in hand and thank Richelieu for his restoration to honour, and he was so imprudent as to advise the King that he was old enough no longer to be held in leading-strings. The Cardinal, in alarm, had him arrested and thrown into the Castle of Vincennes and summarily poisoned, before any steps could be taken to obtain his release under the King's hand and seal. The Marshal died at the age of forty-three without issue, and his sorrowing widow had the magnificent mausoleum erected to him in the church of Aubenas.

From Aubenas an electric tram conveys one in ten minutes to Vals on the Volane, a lively spot during the season, dead out of it when the hotels are shut and the shops containing wares to attract visitors are closed. The only object of interest in Vals itself is the intermittent spring on the left bank of the stream. This rises in a paved basin with no outlet; and springs forth five times during the day. The hours are not certain, but almost invariably it jets at eleven o'clock or a few minutes later, sometimes leaping to the height of fifteen feet, sometimes rising no more than three, and emitting





sulphuretted hydrogen, which phthisic patients inhale eagerly. When the water falls it is sucked back into the bore.

“For the inhabitants of the plains of Gard and the Bouches-du-Rhone,” says Ardouin-Dumazet, “lands roasted by the sun, without shade or water, the valley of the Volane, with its growling torrents, its green chestnuts, the freshness of its slopes, is a little Switzerland. Vals has become to these exuberant populations what Dieppe and Trouville are to the Parisian. But it must not be concluded that folk come here only to be intoxicated with the gas from the springs that rise at every step under cupolas or from amidst rockwork. I have met here with many and genuine bathers, who have come to cure their livers and other internal vessels, by drinking the waters of the spring La Précieuse or that of Saint Jean. Those of the former are not only agreeable to the palate, they have also their *clientelle* which finds health in this mineralised draught. On tasting this light, sparkling, pleasant water one has some wish to be a patient so as to linger at the taps under the shade of the great trees, and to listen to the murmur of the Volane.”

The splendid ruins of the Castle of Boulogne attract a host of visitors from Vals annually during the season. It is reached by carriage, quitting the high road from Aubenas to Privas by a branch road from Auriolles to S. Etienne. The castle was built by a Count of Valentinois in the eleventh century. It remained in the hands of the Grimaldi, Counts of Valentinois, to 1344. In 1384 it became the property of the Lestranges, and they retained it to 1579; when it passed to the de Hautefort de Lestranges till 1632. After that it shifted proprietors rapidly. At the Revolution it belonged to Fay-Gerlande till 1794, when it was sold. The



Count, seeing what was coming, disposed of most of his land to one Blaise Comte on condition that he should every year present a violet at the castle on the 15th of March. Nevertheless it was disposed of to a man of S. Etienne, who pulled much of it down and sold the materials. It was then purchased by the Abbé Volle, curé of Asperjoc, to rescue it from complete demolition, and he retained it for thirty years and then disposed of it to the Marquess Theodore de Lestrang. The magnificent gateway with twisted columns and the arms of Montlaun was erected by Claude René d'Hautefort de Lestrang, who brought to him the barony of Privas; he it was who transformed a feudal stronghold into a sumptuous palace. The façade is sustained on a structural terrace.

A favourite walk of but an hour above Vals and through the valley of the Volane leads to Antraigues. The river has worked its laborious course through masses of basalt and beds of scoria overlying granite and porphyry. At every step some fresh picture opens or some fresh object of interest arrests the eye. Here is a precipice over which leaps a stream in a beautiful fall; there colonnades of prismatic form; further on masses of scorïæ brought down by the rains from the mountain side, whose flanks have been bared. The road plunges even deeper into the ravine that narrows. Then a stream bounds in a double fall over a basaltic face of rock, the second leap being formed by a ledge entitled the Devil's Chair, on which His Majesty is said to cool himself in the water on leaving his heated realms below. Next the Cheese Rock is reached, a mass of basalt standing by itself, and Antraigues appears as an eagle's nest perched on a peninsula of crag between

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VALÉE DE LA VOLANE (LE FAUTEUIL DU DIABLE)



three valleys, those of the Mas, the Bise, and the Volane. The tower of the church is all that remains of the old fortress of the Marquesses of Antraigues. The site is savage, amidst green chestnuts, black lava rocks, and red volcanic cinders. The Marquesses of Antraigues bore an evil name as robbers, lawless and violent in the extreme, for which several were executed at Toulouse. The story of the last of those who owned and for a while occupied the castle forms the theme of Jules Claretie's *Les Muscadins*.

Emmanuel-Louis-Henri de Launez, Comte d'Antraigues, was born at Villeneuve de Berg, in the Vivarais, in 1755. In 1788 he published a *Mémoire sur les états généraux*, which attracted attention, as in it he denounced the hereditary nobility as the greatest scourge with which heaven could chastise a free people. It is an ill bird that befouls its own nest, and that the Count was sincere in his attack on the prerogatives of the aristocracy in France is doubtful judging by his subsequent conduct. This pamphlet caused him to be elected to the States-General convoked for the following year. But no sooner had he taken his seat in the Assembly than he changed his note, and spoke for the retention of the privileges of his class. This sudden conversion caused great offence, and he did not long retain his seat. In consequence of the events of the 5th and 6th October he quitted the Assembly, and left France in 1790 and went first to Switzerland, then to Russia, and after that to Vienna. The coalition of princes forgot his early encouragement of the Revolution and charged him with divers secret missions, and granted him a pension of 36,000 francs. He became the chief organiser of various plots to effect a counter-

revolution in France, that "*guerre de pots de chambre*," as Napoleon called it in his highly coloured language ; and he was at the bottom of the intrigue that provoked the treason of Pichegru. In 1797 he was in Venice, but when he saw that the capital of the Adriatic was about to succumb he fled, but fell into the hands of an outpost of the French army in Italy, and was arrested with all his papers that contained full evidence of the conspiracy of Pichegru. However, he managed to escape by the contrivance of Mme. Sainte-Huberti, who, after having been his mistress, later became his wife. Then he fled to Russia, where he joined the Greek Church, was accorded a pension by the Emperor, and was sent to Dresden as attaché to the Russian Legation. There he published a pamphlet against Bonaparte so violent and scurrilous, that the Saxon Government was constrained to expel him so as to avoid a conflict with France. He departed for London, carrying with him certain documents containing secret articles of the Treaty of Tilsit, of which he had obtained a copy. He communicated these to the English ministry, and in return was granted a liberal pension.

He still maintained relations with Paris, and was mixed up in every plot for the restoration of the Bourbons.

However, it was not given to him to see the realisation of his schemes. The imperial police had sent two emissaries to London, who managed to seduce Lorenzo, the Italian valet of the Count, and through him to obtain notes and despatches which his master was preparing for transmission to the Cabinet of the Prime Minister. On July 22nd, 1812, the Count d'Antraigues having expressed his intention to visit the Prime Minister to







FALL AT ANTRAIGUES

obtain his opinion on a certain memoir, Lorenzo, who had purloined it and committed it to the spies of Napoleon that they might make a transcript of it, saw that his faithlessness was at the point of being discovered. Then he resolved on killing his master and mistress and on blowing out his own brains.

This he did. Such was the version of the story as given in the English newspapers. The only witness to the murder was the Count's coachman. The circumstances of the assassination and suicide were never sifted; the whole matter was hushed up; and it became a matter of mutual recrimination between the French and English Governments, each casting on the other the blame of the murder of this miserable man—a man without a respectable quality.

The name of Antraigues is taken from its position, *Inter Aquæ*, between the three streams—the Volane, the Bise, and the Mas.

On August 16th, the fête of S. Roch, a great pilgrimage is made to Antraigues, attended by many thousand persons. The neighbouring villages send their processions with clergy, crosses, and banners waving. The bells of Antraigues clash merrily. The whole bourg is in gala costume. At nine o'clock a.m. all the processions unite and form one long, many-coloured, winding line that creeps up the hill towards the chapel of S. Roch, hid among chestnut trees. The path is rough, stony, sun-scorched. At intervals are little shrines constructed of boughs and adorned with flowers, roses, broom, lavender. In each of these is a little girl dressed in white with a chaplet on her head, holding a scroll that bears an inscription in honour of the patron saint, lavishing on him every possible expression of love and

respect. The procession advances, now murmuring a litany, now breaking into hymn, and in the rear come the clergy in white, with the blue smoke of incense rising and spreading in the clear summer air.

On reaching the chapel the pilgrims separate their files to allow the ecclesiastics to pass. The priest ascends to the altar for Mass, and the crowd falls into a living stair along the slope of the mountain, kneeling in ranges, some among the chestnut trees, athwart whose leaves the sun shoots arrows of fire that make the white caps and the gold chains of the women flash. The Mass ended, the procession descends in the same order as that in which it mounted, and disperses. The second scene is less edifying—it is changed to the cabaret, where the pilgrims refresh themselves, and the men, in too many cases, carouse.

S. Roch was a native of Montpellier. His story is an ecclesiastical romance. The earliest biographer states candidly that he found “nothing trustworthy about him” in record, and so compiled his life from popular legend. In or about 1350 a squalid-looking man, a beggar, was taken up by the authorities of Montpellier and cast into gaol, where he died. On the removal of the body for burial, it was discovered that the vagabond was Roch, a nephew of the governor of the town, who had embraced a life of dirt and poverty out of “sheer cussedness.” There always have been and always will be men who, like Falstaff, “have a kind of alacrity in sinking”; who revolt against the restraints and refinements of social life, and find their pleasure in living like swine. S. Roch had his parallel in Bampfylde Moore Carew.

There is nothing edifying in the story, nothing in his

career to justify canonisation. Nevertheless he is in vast repute as a patron against plague and fever and sores, and he has been given a place in the Roman martyrology, accepted and held up to be invoked, although absolutely nothing trustworthy is known of him. Can slackness and carelessness go further? In fact, the Roman martyrology, possessing the sanction of the self-entitled Vicar of Christ, is a veritable Noah's Ark containing clean and unclean beasts.

From Antraigues, a climb of an hour leads to the Coupe d'Aizac, the best-preserved crater in the Vivarais. M. Paulett Scrope thus describes it :—

“The Coupe d'Aizac rises on the ridge of one of the granitic abutments that project from the steep escarpment of the Haut Vivarais. It has a beautiful crater slightly broken down towards the north-west, and from the breach a stream of basalt may be seen to descend the flank of the hill, and turning to the north-east enter the valley of the river Volane, which has subsequently cut it entirely across, and discloses three distinct storied ranges; the lowermost very regularly columnar, that in the middle less so, and the upper nearly amorphous, cellular, and with a ragged scoriform surface. This current, which appears originally to have occupied the bottom of the gorge in an extent of four miles, from the village of Antraigues nearly to Vals, has been worn away and carried off on many points by the violence of the torrent. Its relics adhere in vast masses to the granite rocks on both sides, sometimes reaching the height of 160 feet above it. The lower portion of this bed is very beautifully columnar, the upper obscurely so; this latter has been in parts destroyed, and a pavement or causeway left, formed by an assemblage of upright and almost geometrically regular columns fitted together with the utmost symmetry.”

One interesting lesson one learns from the overflow of this crater, and that is that the prismatic structure of basalt is due to pressure from above. Except under great superincumbent weight it has not crystallised regularly.

A beautiful fall in four dives under the bridge of the road to Genestelle, on the road to Antraigues, irresistibly obliges one with a camera to take views. But indeed the whole neighbourhood is weeping these beautiful tears—tears of joy that the fire floods are over.

The valley of the Ardèche above where it falls into the basin of Aubenas is finer still; it leads into the heart of the noblest volcanic heights.

At Pont de la Beaume one has the stately tower of the castle of Ventadour rising from the summit of a rock that commands the road up to Thueyts (pronounced Two-ets) and that to Jaujac, where the Lignon flows into the Ardèche.

The Ventadour family were Levis by origin, and claimed to be descendants of the tribe of Levi of the seed of Aaron, and therefore justified in meddling to any extent in ecclesiastical matters. It is really wonderful what changes can be rung on the name of Levi. It becomes in England Lewis and Levison, Lowe and Lyons, and Lawson.

But there was absolutely no justification in the Ventadour family asserting to themselves a Hebraic origin. It is strange how eager these Levis were to assert a fabulous descent, and how desirous the modern sons of Levi are to obscure the traces of what is undoubtedly theirs.

The Levis first appear in history in the eleventh century, and derive their name not from Levi, but from



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CASTLE OF VENTADOUR







IN THE ARDÈCHE



their castle of Levis near Chevreuse; they became Seigneurs of Mirepoix. Philippe IV. de Levis, who died in 1440, was the father of Bermond, the ancestor of the Ventadour branch. He became Baron of La Voute, and was father of Louis, who married the heiress of the Count of Ventadour. Gilbert III. de Levis was created Duke of Ventadour and peer of France, the former in 1578, the latter in 1589. The castle was blown up by that determined wrecker of feudal strongholds, Richelieu, in 1626.

At Pont-de-la-Beaume a steep ascent leads to a level road, over a terrace of lava through which the Lignon has cleft a way from Jaujac, clean cut as by a knife, with basaltic ranges on both sides. The mountain forms here are very fine; to the right is the Gravenne de Soulhiol, rent by a ravine down which flows a thread of silver. On the left La Tanargue, 4,330 feet, and the rock of Abraham, 4,630 feet, closing up the scene. The whole when powdered with snow, as I saw it, of Alpine grandeur.

The Coupe de Jaujac, that sent a flood of lava down the valley of the Lignon, rises to an insignificant height above the village, and is easily visited. At the foot of the cone of scoria rises a spring where picnickers from Vals settle to lunch, and amuse themselves with smashing there the bottles of wine they have brought with them, and raising a pile of the fragments. The side of the cone of Jaujac is indeed so strewn with broken pots of *foie gras* and battered sardine-tins, that the volcanic vent conveys the impression of having been the eruption of a great establishment of grocery and preserves.

The sides of the bowl of the crater are dotted with

chestnut trees, so as somewhat to disguise its character. Volcanic dust and cinder seem to be peculiarly favourable to the vegetation of the Spanish chestnut.

The village of Jaujac stands on the bed of lava that issued from this cone, on the edge of a mural precipice, 150 feet high, and is connected with old Jaujac on the further side by a stone bridge. There are the scanty remains of a castle in this latter. The château, in close proximity to the village or town, is now converted into a school.

The Gravenne de Soulhiol also disgorged its lava into the valley of the Lignon, about three hundred yards above the junction of this river with the Ardèche.

"A wide and massive plateau of basalt thus formed, after entering the valley of La Beaume, prolongs itself to some distance below Neigles, bordering the Ardèche on the south with a bold and precipitous wall which may be seen to rest on a layer of pebbles, the ancient bed of the river."

At Pont-de-la-Beaume a road to the right leads up the valley of Fontollière to the fertile basin of Champagne, at the head of which stands Montpezat, the foot of the mountain, as its name implies, and it lies, in fact, under the Gravenne, that has poured its flood of molten lava into the valley and filled it to a depth of 150 feet. The Gravenne de Montpezat has a very regular crater dipping slightly to the north, and it was on this side that the stream of basalt flowed for a width of half a mile. It reached the point where the Bourges entered the Fontollière and there stopped, the volcano having exhausted its efforts. Before reaching Montpezat, the ruins of the Castle of Pourcheirolles appear in a site truly marvellous, perched on a tongue of land between the rivers Fontollière and Pourseilles.



CRATER OF LA GRAVENE





When the Gravenne had turned the former valley into a lake of molten stone, and when that lake had chilled, then the watery elements began their work. The two rivers laboured to fray themselves a course. The Pourseilles has cut through an upper and amorphous bed of lava, then it leaps over a lower and very regular bed of prismatic basalt that rests on softer material, which has been worn away by weather and water so that the basalt forms a cornice and canopy overhead. Pourcheirolles is undoubtedly one of the most picturesque points in Ardèche. The castle, perched as a vultures' lair in the midst of the valley of Montpezat, suspended between precipices, seems calculated to evade and defy assault. The castle was, however, erected not by a man of war, but a man of peace, Cardinal Pierre Flandrin, born on the flanks of the Mézenc in 1312. He was created Cardinal by Gregory XI., who employed him in various delicate negotiations. He died in 1378. His tomb was at Viviers, but was destroyed by the Huguenots. His nephew, Jean Flandrin, after having been Archbishop of Auch, was created Cardinal by Clement VII. The choice of the valley of Montpezat for their residence in summer heats was due to proximity to Avignon, at that time the seat of the papacy. The castle was never very large, and its importance was due to its position, not to its walls and towers.

The river Burzet flows into the Fontollière, and a road leads up the valley to the little town of the same name as the stream. The church, with nave and side aisles, dates from 1400. When the three bells in the tower are rung, the tower sways eight inches out of the perpendicular. A walk of from three to four hours from

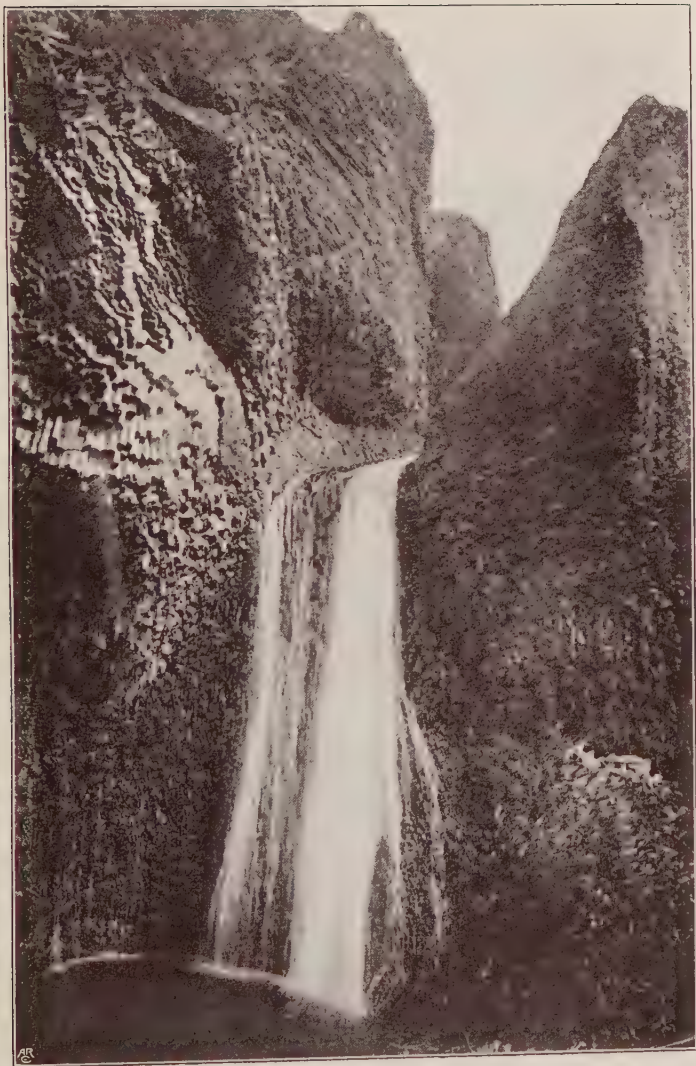
Burzet leads to the very fine cascade of Ray-Pic, where the river leaps over a basaltic escarpment that had been vomited by the volcano of the same name, which filled the valley of the Burzet to the distance of ten miles. "He who has not seen Ray-Pic has seen nothing" is a saying among the peasantry.

At Burzet, on Good Friday, a procession perambulates the little place, bearing representations on cars of the scenes of the Passion, much like that which is famous at Seville, but here on a much smaller scale.

The river of Burzet has not, like other streams, sawn its way through the basalt, only through the upper uncrystallised portion which it has carried away, and it slides on its course over a paved bed of the tops of the prisms, "not unlike the Roman roads in Italy, but arranged with far greater neatness and accuracy of design." The columns in Lower Vivarais, says Mr. Scrope, are usually hexahedral, often five-sided; those of four occur rarely, of seven still more rarely.

But to return to the valley of Montpezat. Of this small town not much need be said. It is a very ancient place, and was the second stage on the high road to Gergovia. It contained a temple to Jupiter Olympus, and a medieval castle of which very little remains. But at Montpezat quarters must be found for the night, if it be desired to ascend so as to explore the Vestide du Pal, the most formidable mouth by which subterranean fires were belched, in all France, and perhaps even in all Europe.

An excellent road following the course of the Roman highway mounts here to the miserable village of Le Pal, 3,600 feet above the sea, where in winter the snow heaps itself up before the raging winds and buries the



FALLS OF RUY PIC



houses so that not infrequently a week passes before the inhabitants see daylight. The Vestide rises above this village to the height from the sea of 4,220 feet. The name Vestide in patois signifies a sheltered place, and is applied to the crater itself, the only sheltered spot thereabouts, and indeed this huge basin is an Eden to the peasants of Le Pal. The bottom is cultivated, but the sides are covered with timber. The volcano is remarkable not only for its enormous proportions, the bottom of the crater being over two miles in circumference, but also for its alternate dejections of lava, mud, and cinders. The depth of the crater is 900 feet, and its diameter 5,500 feet.

In the midst of the crater a slight cone has been raised by the expiring efforts of the volcanic fires. Each eruption has left its traces written in ineffaceable characters on the slopes of the crater. Here was one of sand and mud, there one of lava and scoriæ ejected over the bed of mud. Then again an outpour of lava, and after that another of mud containing great boulders of granite burnt red and rendered friable.

"Imagination is roused," says M. A. Mazon, "at the thought of what must have been the scene when the volcano of la Vestide belched forth tempests of fire which agitated, upset, and shaped the soil of the Vivarais. The huge bowl, incessantly active, threw out showers of cinders into the basins alike of the Rhone and of the Loire. When winter came with its hurricanes of snow, deluges of water were precipitated into the furnace, but quenched the fires for a moment only, and then burst forth in torrents of mud mingled with steam. It was thus that the walls of the crater were built up into veritable mountains."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Voyage aux Pays Volcaniques du Vivarais*, Privas, 1878.



From the foot of the cone issues the source of the Fontollière, strong enough at ten paces down to turn a mill. Near the Vestide is the little lake Forraud, not situated in a crater, but formed in a depression of the surface. Also, near at hand, is the Suc de Bauzon, another volcanic vent, red-headed, and 4,430 feet high. On the summit is a large stone table, at which, according to tradition, every year the four Seigneurs of Montpezat, Roux, Urclades, and S. Cirgues met, and each sat on a seat in his own territory, as all their lands met in the midst of this table. There is no crater on this *suc*.

We return again to the valley of the Ardèche and mount to Thueyts, leaving on the left the pretty little bathing establishment of Neyrac.

The road ascends along the flank of the Petit Gravenne on the left bank of the river and crosses a bridge thrown over the stream of the Mordaric, whose waters form the cascade of the Gueule d'Enfer. The huge basaltic wall now comes into sight that sustains the plateau of Thueyts, on which the town is built. The river has carved for itself a channel through this mass of lava and the granite below, and exhibits a majestic colonnade of basalt 150 feet high, and extending with few breaks for a mile and a half along the valley. But one of these breaks forms the Echelle du Roy, a rift due to dislocation of the flow. To visit the Pavé des Géants, the finest basaltic causeway in the Vivarais, it is well to descend to the river at the Gueule d'Enfer, sometimes on basaltic prisms, then on masses of granite. The columnar basalt now becomes regular; some prisms 60 feet long, others shorter jointed. The black walls rise like those of a fortress, and the path follows the base till the Royal Ladder is reached, a staircase in a natural

chimney, where every step is a basaltic prism that has been broken. The view of the valley from the top of the ladder is of striking beauty. The ascent is 240 feet.

In Thueyts itself there is not much to be seen of architectural interest.

Still further up the valley of the Ardèche, by the fine road constructed by the Estates of Languedoc for communication with Le Puy as easier than that followed by the Romans by Montpezat, is Mayres in the bottom of a valley and in a delightful situation surrounded by mountains. It is the last station before ascending the pass over the backbone of the Cevennes.

Here flutters and soars a great black eagle, that carries off lambs to the nest in the rocks of Astel rising over 900 feet from the valley. It is believed to come from the Alps to spend its breeding season in the Vivarais, both in these rocks and in those of Abraham, and that it returns to the Alps in winter. This is not the *Aquila fulva*, which is common enough, but the *Aquila imperialis*. It soars so high and keeps so well at a distance from men that the hunters very rarely are able to kill one.

How greatly one would like to know what the men in medieval days thought of the volcanic phenomena of Auvergne and the Velay and the Vivarais. Possibly enough they did not give a thought to them, any more than does the peasant of to-day. But the baron who built his castle on the top of a rock compiled of basaltic prisms thick-set as reeds by a river side, the builders of churches who exploited these naturally faced columns—did they never ask how these came into existence, what their origin was? One can understand how they explained the existence of fossil shells on the moun-

tains—they were relics of the universal deluge. But these marvellous prisms, as neatly made and put together as the cells of wax in a honeycomb—did they look at them and not exercise their minds over them? There is not a particle of evidence that they did, although there were men of inquiring and eager minds in all ages. No suspicion that volcanoes had raged and spluttered on French soil occurred to any man till the year 1751, when Guettard and Malesherbes arrived at Montélimar on their way to Paris from Italy, when they halted in amazement at the pavement of the streets composed of polygonal cubes of basalt. “Why!” exclaimed Guettard, “these are precisely the same sort of stones we have seen paving the Roman roads of Rome and Naples—and those came from volcanoes.” The two men asked to be shown the quarries whence these blocks came, and they were taken to Rochemaure. They turned aside from their direct course, visited the mountains of Vivarais, but not till they reached Auvergne were their minds thoroughly convinced. In 1751, that same year, Guettard published his *Mémoire sur quelques Montagnes de la France qui ont été des Volcans*. It roused a storm of jeers and objections. A savant of Clermont even wrote to controvert his thesis, and argued that the cinders were the remains of forges established by the Romans. But at Montélimar Guettard and Malesherbes had dined with an Abbé Faujas de S. Fond, living on the spot. His eyes were unsealed, his interest was kindled, and he went through the Vivarais and explored the basaltic beds and the craters. Finally, the works of this man in 1778, and of de Soulaire in 1870, placed the further existence of volcanoes beyond possibility of dispute.





THE GORGES OF THE ARDICHIE

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CANON OF THE ARDÈCHE

Ruoms—The church—Aven of Réméjadou—Sampson—Vallon—Captain Merle—The last Marquess—Tapestries—Clotilde de Surville—Pont de l'Arc—Salavas—Slaughter of the garrison—Caves—Goule de Foussoubie—Chames—Castle of Ebbo—Pas du Mousse—Grotte of Oustalas—Rapids—La Madeleine—Tour d'Aiguilles—Aiguèze—S. Martin—The return journey—Two men in a boat—Grotte de S. Marcel—The Gours—Dolmens—The Aven of Vigneclose.

**R**UOMS is a quaint little town on the Ardèche, where that river issues from between parallel walls of lias, not of great elevation, laid in regular horizontal beds. The road follows the river upwards for a short way only, and then turns up the Ligne towards Argentière. Ruoms was a walled town, and a considerable portion of the fortifications remains enclosing the church, old houses, and narrow and dirty lanes. The church is interesting, very early and rude Romanesque, lofty, with three bays and side aisles. There are quasi-transepts, not extending beyond the aisles. The east end is square. The piers and arches are unmoulded. A curious feature is a window on the south, apparently to serve for a clerestory light, with pilasters and sculptured capitals, but it has never been pierced through, so that it acts merely as a relieving arcade in the wall. Another unusual feature is that the wall of the south aisle has in it narrow square-headed



lights in recesses under relieving arches. The tower has a zigzag ornament above the bell windows in black lava alternating with white limestone.

The Ardèche is joined below the town by the river of La Beaume, that flows through a cañon very similar to that through which the Ardèche itself has run before it reaches the bridge of Ruoms. These cañons through the lias are curious rather than picturesque, the strata lie horizontally as regularly disposed as stones in an artificial wall. On the high ground some way up the Beaume, on the plateau, or *gras*, is the *aven* or pot-hole of Réméjadou, twenty-five feet in diameter and eighty feet deep. One can hear the rush of water below, and this issues from the rock in the spring of Bourbouillet, two miles off, with sufficient volume to turn a mill. M. Janet says:—

“This *aven* has water flowing in its depths, filling the entire bottom. This stream issues from an arcade on one side about eighteen feet high, and disappears under a similar arch. It flows from north to south, which agrees with what the shepherd of Bourbouillet asserted, that this subterranean stream issues at the spring of that name. According to him, the inhabitants of Bourbouillet were much surprised one day to see the water of this spring charged with sawdust, and the explanation of the phenomenon was obtained only some days later, when they ascertained that some woodcutters who had been sawing up a good deal of timber had ridded themselves of the sawdust by throwing it into the *aven*.”<sup>1</sup>

This pot-hole was explored in 1892 by M. Gaupillat, and he established the curious fact that the underground stream enters and leaves the *aven* by natural

<sup>1</sup> A. Janet, *Annuaire du Club Alpin*, 1891.

siphons, and not through galleries, so that it is not possible to track the stream up or down.

Standing high above the junction of the Chassezac and Ardèche are the mountain and rock of Sampson, supporting a little village and church with spire on a *col* between the mighty crest of perpendicular rock and the crag that falls abruptly to the Chassezac. A small omnibus conveys travellers to Vallon, which is the place at which to stay, whence to make the descent of the cañon of the Ardèche. But the visitor who does this must be prepared either to return to Vallon by carriage over the Causse, some twenty miles, or he must be without luggage, and catch the train at S. Just or S. Marcel, and meet his impedimenta elsewhere, perhaps at Le Teil, for the canoes that shoot the rapids of the Ardèche are too small to accommodate baggage.

Vallon is not a town in itself of much interest, but it contains the château of the redoubtable Huguenot captain, Merle de Lagorce, who sacked Malzieu and Issoire, and burnt the cathedral at Mende. Vallon was in the hands of the Reformed, but, on the other hand, old Vallon with its castle on the height above it remained to the Catholics. Opposite that, on the further side of the river, is Salavas, where a strong and extensive castle, now in ruins, occupied the crest of a precipitous rock. These two positions Merle was determined on taking; he succeeded, and died in the castle of Salavas at the end of January, 1584, at the age of thirty-five. I have given his life in my *Deserts of Central France*.

His son Hérail de Merle, Baron de Lagorce, joined the Church, and entered into the service of the King.

On February 6th, 1842, died in the château of Vallon

the Marquess Emmanuel de Merle de Lagorce, last male descendant of the eldest branch of the family, and left the château to his sister, married to the Count de Chapelain, who sold it to the town of Vallon in 1846. When the citizens came to take possession and convert the castle into a mairie, school, etc., they discovered in a loft a whole series of superb tapestries rolled up and forgotten. These came from the château of Montréal in L'Argentière, brought thence in 1783. They are from Aubusson looms, and are in seven panel pictures representing scenes from the "Jerusalem Delivered" of Tasso. They adorn the chamber now used by the magistracy. Very fine is the hammered ironwork of the balustrade of the great staircase.

Vallon had its hour of celebrity under the Empire and the Restoration, when Vanderbourg published the medieval poems of Clotilde de Surville, who lived at Vallon at the period when Joan of Arc was fighting against the English.

Marguerite Eléonore Clotilde de Vallon-Chalys, or de Surville, was supposed to have been a noble lady authoress of a series of sentimental poems. She was said to have been born in 1405 in the château of Vallon. Her mother, Pulchérie de Fay Collon, had lived in the court of Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix, and had taken advantage of his library to enrich her mind by the study of Greek and Latin authors, of French and Italian poets, and she brought up the young Clotilde with the same tastes. The girl was a precocious genius, and composed verses at the age of twelve. In 1421 she married the Chevalier Béranger de Surville, who quitted her early to fight under the command of the Dauphin, afterwards Charles VII. It was then that

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she wrote a *Héroïde*, opening with the words "Clotilde au sien amy douce mande accolade." But the composition contains allusions, and repeats ideas of a period so much later, that suspicions were aroused as to its authenticity when published in 1803. Vanderbourg, the editor, insisted on it being genuine. He had obtained the MSS. from the heirs of the Marquess Joseph Etienne de Surville, a noble who during the period of the Revolution had been executed at Le Puy in 1798. But this de Surville was himself a poet, of a mediocre quality certainly, and it was from his leavings that the editor produced Clotilde's compositions. According to the Memoir prefixed to her poems, from the pen of the Marquess, her graceful verses attracted the attention of Margaret of Scotland, who sent her a crown of golden leaves bearing the inscription: "Marguerite d'Ecosse à Marguerite d'Hélicon."

Clotilde lost her husband at the siege of Orléans after a union that had lasted but one year. About 1450 she married her son to Héloïse de Goyon de Vergy. Both died in 1468, leaving to Clotilde a grandchild, Camille, who never married, and Clotilde closed a long life at the end of the fifteenth century, after having celebrated the victory of Fornoue in a poem that she dedicated to Charles VIII.

That the poems are a late fabrication by the marquess, who was shot at Le Puy, cannot be doubted. In the "*Verselets à mon premier né*" that begin "O cher enfantelet, vray pourtraict de ton père," there is obvious imitation of a romance by Bérquin, published in 1775. But the whole tone and character of the poems make it quite certain that they were composed in the eighteenth century, to be palmed off as the literary achieve-

ments of a lady of the forger's ancestry in the fifteenth. Villemain, after showing that they are *fictions antiques*, concludes: "After one has recognised that the poems of Clotilde are a modern fabrication, betraying itself by the very perfection of the artifice employed, yet the fraud once established, the merit of the fraud remains incontestable."

A good road leads down the Ardèche to the Pont de l'Arc, one of the great natural curiosities of the south of France. The river in descending the ravine between walls of Jura limestone encountered a long spur that barred its way, and drove it to describe a great loop. But the limestone is full of holes, caves, and cracks, and the torrent rushing down and beating against the great escarpment, impatient to get through and resenting the detour, bored till at last it burst a way through, and having once penetrated proceeded to enlarge the portal, till the river even in its greatest floods can rush through. The measurements are 193 feet from side to side, 110 feet to the crown of the arch, and to the summit of the rock 215 feet. Formerly the people of the country used this natural bridge to pass from one side of the river to the other. In the sixteenth century a fortress was erected on it, the possession of which was sharply contested by Catholics and Protestants, and Louis XIII. had it destroyed. The passage can still be made by means of a very narrow path cut in a ledge of the rock, but only one person, and he with a steady head, can traverse it. Louis XIII. had this path broken down, but the gap has been bridged over by poles.

The descent of the cañon is made from Vallon to S. Martin, and takes from five to eight hours according to the amount of water in the river, and costs 30 francs.

Rapids are numerous, and some not a little dangerous. The gorge, cut through the lower cretaceous limestone, has not its walls as lofty as those of the famous cañon of the Tarn, but the scenery in it is more varied, and it is of the wildest beauty.

Opposite old Vallon, as already mentioned, is Salavas. Hérail de Merle, son of the great Huguenot captain, abjured Protestantism, and married the daughter of Montréal, chief of the Catholics of the Vivarais. Profiting by his absence, his Huguenot vassals in Vallon revolted, and aided by a locksmith of Salavas entered the castle and butchered all the garrison. They captured the baroness and her children. But as Salavas was unimportant as a stronghold without the Tour du Moulin in the river, the Calvinists brought the Baroness Lagorce and the children under its walls in a boat, drew their long knives and threatened to cut all their throats unless the tower surrendered.

Salavas again fell into the hands of the Catholics, and was held by M. de la Chadenède in 1628, with forty-five men against the Duke de Rohan, head of the Calvinists, at the head of 500 men, 200 cavalry, two cannon, and a body of sappers and miners. Salavas was not taken till 200 of the assailants were killed and wounded. The castle, though in ruins, still has portions of its walls and a gate intact. Le Tour du Moulin, mentioned above, is built on a rock in the middle of the river, and was the key of the passage. It was captured by the Huguenots in 1570 by artifice. The small Catholic garrison one evening saw a train of women leading mules with sacks of corn come down to the waterside.

The garrison at once went over to assist them in unloading. But scarcely had they left their boat than



they were fallen upon. The women were, in fact, Huguenot men disguised in female attire. They shot down every one of the soldiers and took possession of the tower.

Before reaching the Pont de l'Arc the cañon begins ; rocky walls, grey, yellow, and fawn colour, stand up above the river, leaving no space between them but for the river ; the road has been cut in cornice in the rock above it. The caves of the Bear, the Temple, and the Pulpit are but some of the thousands that open in cliffs that are honeycombed with them. The two latter were employed for meetings during the time of the revolt of the Camisards. The Prophetess Isabeau, clothed in white and wearing a gold circlet on her head, here went into ecstasies and harangued the insurgents, bidding them slay and spare none of the Philistines, and promising to them invulnerability.

A little further down is the Goule de Foussoubie, a stream that issues from the rocks just above the level of the Ardèche. The water that feeds it consists of seven rills on the Causse, three miles distant, that plunge into a pot-hole and disappear. Various attempts have been made to follow the underground course, but all have failed and one ended fatally. In dry weather very little water issues from the Goule, but it comes forth in volumes after a storm.

The boat shoots under the Pont de l'Arc ; the rock that has been pierced is ninety feet thick. As already said, a fortress stood above, destroyed by Louis XIII., on a bit of rising ground on the left bank. There are still remains of the octagonal tower and enclosing wall and of some of the chambers tenanted by the garrison. But it was an *oppidum*, a place of refuge from pre-

WORKING MEN'S  
COLLEGE  
LIBRARY



LE PONT DE L'ARC



historic times, as early stone weapons, and later Gallo-Roman ware, have been found there, as well as accumulations of pebbles to serve as sling-stones. The road down the river ends at Chames, where is a boatman, who lives by fishing and ferrying over any of the inhabitants of S. Remèze or la Bastide de Verac, who desire to cross. A stream issues from a grotto ; it is the Fontaine de Vamale. The cave is apparently closed at the end, but on entering one finds on the right hand an opening into a valley, giving access to a terrace above the river, lighted by the setting sun, in which luxuriate lavender, Judas trees, evergreen dwarf oaks, juniper, and wild asparagus. This tiny valley is bounded on the west by a lofty calcareous wall in which is a rent, and a narrow path leads up this gap among bushes to the top of the plateau. It is by this track that the inhabitants of Vic descend and ascend before or after crossing the river.

Hard by is a natural cave on the right bank, partly closed by a wall, so overgrown with ivy that were it not pointed out one might pass without discovering that man built himself a residence here. This is called the Castle of Ebbo, and the tradition is current that the Templars of La Madeleine fled to it and hid there when sentence had gone forth against them by Philip the Fair in 1312 ; but it was probably a post that belonged to the Seigneur of Verac to watch his fisheries.

Chames is a little hamlet on the left bank of the Ardèche, where the rocks fall back and allow of slopes on which can grow olive trees, vines, plums, and almonds. The water is here still and seems transformed to a mirror, so that from the opposite side, that of the Castle of Ebbo, when the sun is full on the white

cottages and gleaming limestone rocks, they as well as the fruit trees are reflected with intensity in the glassy surface.

The Rock of the Five Windows seems to block the way. Below Chames the river bends around a peninsula which is called the Pas du Mousse, so called in satire, for no moss grows there or can grow ; it is all rubble brought down and deposited there by the river. A rock shooting up some eighty or ninety feet to a sharp point and pierced at bottom is called the Needle, and the cave is its eye. A little further down is the Grotto of Oustalas in the face of a cliff above a narrow meadow, with trees and a farmhouse and sheds. In order to reach the entry, that is like a giant's mouth yawning, steps have been cut in the rock ; so also within to reach portions of the cave that have been employed as chambers. There are remains of a wall that formerly closed the mouth, and this cave was undoubtedly inhabited at some time, but when cannot be said. One can see the notches in the wall for beams of a roof, and recesses employed as cupboards.

As we continue our descent, the heights of the sheer walls full of holes are as slices of Gruyère cheese, streaked here black, there flaming red, then of a ghastly white, now forming into needles, then with their crests riddled as though the walls of a ruined castle pierced with windows. Evergreen oaks, the spiky-leaved kermes, bursts of flame from yellow broom, flashes of pink when the Judas tree is in bloom ; not a house, not a field—all silent, the only sound the roar of the water over a rapid. The canoe dances, bounds, shoots ; by a skilful turn of the oar avoids a fang of rock, escapes a huge boulder, darts into still water, where the boatman bails







"THE CATHEDRAL"

out that which has poured over the gunwale, for it is over your ankles. Then, again, the growl of another rapid, more swinging down between rocks in races of water green as grass, then gliding over shallow portions where we can see the stones and gravel at the bottom and the fish darting; then over a depression, the water bottle-green, too deep for the sunlight to penetrate, close under an overhanging cliff.

A long green tongue of land shoots out with ruins on the summit, La Madeleine, a leper-hospital, where these unfortunates were nursed and kept in seclusion under the Templars. Again, huge fawn-coloured precipices, caves out of which the drip of water has hung stalactitic deposits like dropping veils, one in which it has built up a huge finger; and then, right before one, a Gothic cathedral with spires—Le Tour des Aiguilles. We are carried round, and the forms have completely changed.

Then after five hours or more the walls begin to sink, a stream breaks in through a doorway on the left, and we issue through a portal. The river runs more smoothly, and on the summit of the rock, creeping down its side, studded with ruins, is the imposing dead town of Aiguèze, long a subject of dispute between the counts of Toulouse and the bishops of Viviers. There were houses near the river bank, but all are now in ruins, destroyed by the great floods of 1890 and 1895. On the left bank is the little village of S. Martin, where we disembark, and think we have seen a succession of marvels the like of which are not to be seen elsewhere save—with a difference—on the Tarn. But just here, to spoil the last tableau, a company has erected huge and hideous factories for silk-weaving on the top of the

rock opposite S. Martin, to disfigure the last spur of crag on the Ardèche. Failure has attended the attempt, and the factories are abandoned. Even if they fall into ruins, their ruins cannot possibly become picturesque.

Below is a light and graceful suspension bridge flung across the river to take the place of a stone bridge, swept away by the great flood of 1895, that rose half-way up the church of S. Martin and filled most of the houses.

And now, to conclude this chapter, I must give my personal experiences, which I am usually unwilling to obtrude, but which I give as they may be valuable to others who descend the cañon.

There are humours in travelling; some make you laugh out at once, others only after the experience is past. To this latter belong mine on the day I descended the Ardèche.

The beginning of the trouble was this. I had arranged that the hotel keeper at Vallon should furnish me and my wife and the boatmen with a sound lunch, to be taken on our way down, and when we arrived at the place where the boat was to attend to us we found that neither the garçon of the inn who guided us had brought the food, nor had the boatmen fetched it from the hotel. Time was precious, the distance was considerable, and we could not wait to send back for it. Any one who knows what a French *café au lait* means will understand how internally unprovided we were for many hours without food. We started, and for five hours were descending the rapids. When we reached S. Martin there was no carriage, but after an hour we obtained at five o'clock an excellent *déjeuné*, having eaten nothing since 8 a.m.; but we had hardly felt

hunger, so gorgeous had been the scenery through which we had passed. At 6 p.m. the carriage from Vallon arrived, and the horses had to be baited for two hours. At 7 p.m. we started. Now the high road to Vallon makes a long detour; it passes by S. Just and S. Marcel, and crawls slowly up to the cause. The horses were put in at 7 p.m., and we departed. As it happened, I had tipped the boatmen at S. Martin, thinking I had seen the last of them, and they were flush of money. They had thirty francs, plus the tips to both of them, and during three hours they had been imbibing absinthe, cognac, and wine.

We had not proceeded far before I heard voices behind the carriage in lively conversation, not to say in altercation, and standing up and looking back I saw that we were dragging behind the carriage a cart laden with the canoe and the two men in the boat.

I stopped the carriage and inquired the meaning of this, and the driver informed me that he had drawn the cart behind him from Vallon to S. Martin for the express purpose of bringing back the boat and the men, as it was not possible for the canoe to make its way up the rapid on the return journey. Twenty miles uphill with a trailer behind and dark night setting in was a serious prospect, especially after the horses had already done all the miles from Vallon to S. Martin. When we reached S. Just, but a few miles out of S. Martin, the bright light from a tavern and the voices of happy men within were too much for the two men in a boat behind; they unhitched the cart and dropped into the cabaret to recruit. As we drove on our coachman found that the horses went freer. He looked behind and saw that the cart and boat were not attached. He

swore freely and copiously, but drove into the next village, S. Marcel, where he halted in front of a public-house, and no words of mine could induce him to proceed till he knew what had become of the trailer. After a while up came the cart and the boat. One of the men had a cousin at S. Just, and he had cajoled him into lending his horse to draw the cart so as to catch us up. Our coachman, with a volley of expletives not worth recording, bade them hitch on again. And he drove forward. I, sitting back in the carriage, heard a dialogue proceed behind.

"But, Jean, my cousin lent me his horse."

"That is certain."

"But I cannot let him return to S. Just without refreshment. I must assuredly give him a glass of something to warm him."

"That is reasonable."

"Then let us unhitch."

So again the trailer was unfastened, and the cart, boat, and men in the boat fell away into the darkness behind.

After a while the coachman rose from his seat, and looking back saw that the trailer was no longer in its place. He exploded east, he exploded west, also to north and south; and would have halted again, but that I interfered and insisted that he should proceed. After some demur he did so. We reached Vallon at midnight. The night was pitch dark and cold; the month was March. When we would have reached the town had we been encumbered with the trailer, goodness only knows. We left Vallon next day at 11 a.m., and the two boatmen had not arrived by that time, nor do I know when they did arrive, and what is more, I do not care.

This I relate as a caution to future visitors to the cañon of the Ardèche. If they intend to return by carriage to Vallon, let them remember that they will have to drag back with them the boat *en queue*.

At S. Marcel is a notable cavern that may be visited from the village or from the river, near the bank of which is a lodge for the man who undertakes to act as guide through its halls and galleries, and illumine them with Bengal lights. The grotto was discovered in 1838 by a man in pursuit of a rabbit. The cavern extends for several kilometres underground, and is rich in stalactites and stalagmites. The main gallery was the channel of an ancient river formed by the drainage of the fissured *causse* of Bidon and S. Remèze. This corridor, which is without incrustations, leads to *le Balcon*, a vertical wall thirty feet high, over which the ancient river fell in cascade. This is surmounted by an iron ladder. The second portion of the cavern consists of another long gallery conducting to the *Forêt-Noire*, a stone cascade of sixty feet, up which one mounts by a second iron ladder, to attain to the third portion of the cave, the Cathedral, where is the finest group of stalagmites in the whole grotto. Two more ladders lead to the Catacombs, a chaos of blocks fallen from the roof, and remarkable for its "*bassins de dentelles*," or "*gours*"—that is to say, a series of basins as holy-water stoups, formed by incrustations. I will let M. Martel describe them:—

"Here begins one of the most curious and admirable stalagmitic formations to be found in these caverns. Imagine if you can a series of irregular basins set in the wall and superposed in retreat one above the other, forming steps—they are of various widths and depths, from a few *décimètres*



to several mètres—their walls so transparent that they allow the light of the candles put in them to shine through. Their lips are capriciously twisted like writhing serpents, and they are lined with minute needles and tiny prisms of carbonate of lime, as delicate in their details as the antennæ of polypi, all either white, yellow, or rose colour, forming all together a vast pyramid of water-basins in onyx set with diamonds.”<sup>1</sup>

Further ladders and galleries are traversed, and more splendid masses of stalactite and stalagmite are seen.

Formerly there were collections of these in the outer galleries, but they were wantonly destroyed by the peasants and by visitors.

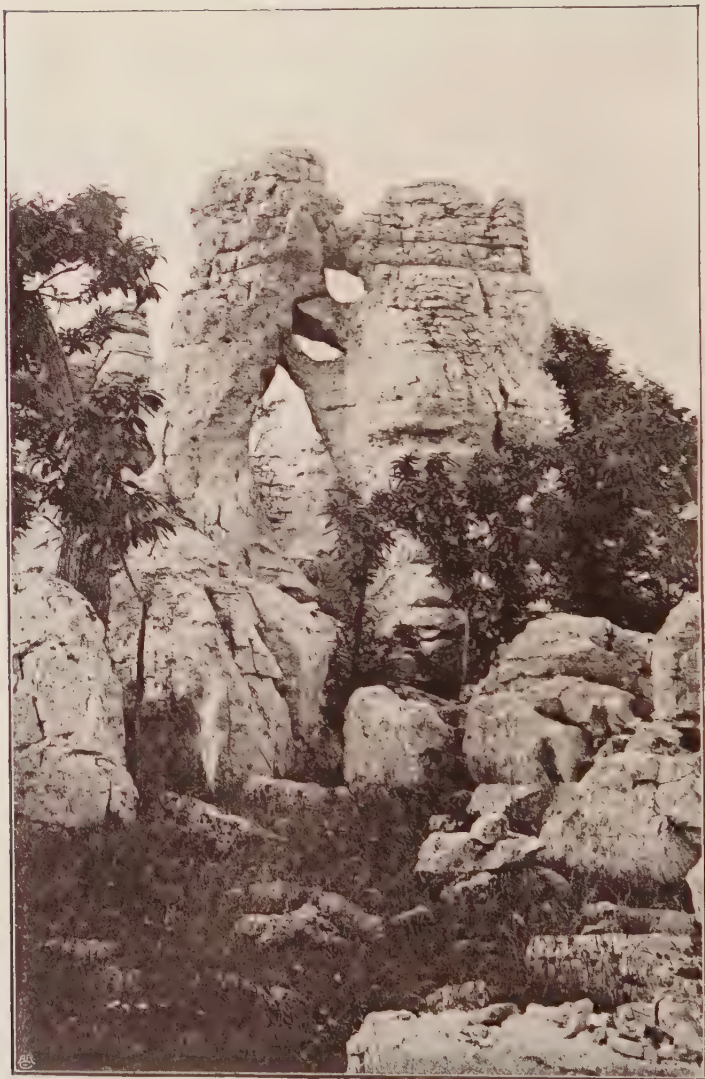
This cavern was anciently occupied by man not only in the prehistoric age, but later, for Gaulish black pottery has been found in it. I may add that on the Causse Grand Champ and on the Champ Vermeil are dolmens.

An *aven* of a really appalling character is that of Vigne Close, near the hamlet of Fontlongue. It was explored by M. Martel in 1892, and descends 575 feet into the bowels of the cause, or grasse, as the limestone plateau is here called.

A well had to be descended 165 feet deep. Then came a redan, a slope, and this had to be gone down and a second ladder of ropes attached. The second well was 135 feet. Then a second inclined plain or redan, and a third well 60 feet; after that a succession of slides and drops in stages for another 60 feet. Then a well of 150 feet. It demands no little daring to descend into such an abyss entirely shut off from the light of day, and where a few falling stones caused by the vibration of the ladder might prove fatal.

<sup>1</sup> *Les Abîmes*, Paris, 1894.





PAIOLIVE: THE LION AND THE BEAR

## CHAPTER IX

# THE WOOD OF PAÏOLIVE

Curiosity of the wood—How the rock disintegrated—Extraordinary shapes—A labyrinth—La Gleyzasse—Hermitage—the King of Païolive—The Royalists of 1792—Jalès—The Bailli of Suffren—Taking the inventories.

LE BOIS DE PAÏOLIVE is in repute among the inhabitants of the plain and its great cities as one of the wonders of the world, at least of that self-contained world of France, in which is everything, outside of which nothing. Païolive is *Pagus Olivæ*. Curious the wood is, but cannot compare with Mourèze or Montpellier le Vieux, which have characteristics in common with it. The characteristics are these. There is an extensive elevated platform of cretaceous limestone of very unequal consistency. The result of this inequality has been that the softer matter has been washed away, whether at the retreat of the Tertiary ocean, or whether by atmospheric degradation alone is uncertain, leaving the cores of greater resistance isolated, as turrets, obelisks, bridges. And these cores themselves containing soluble matter have been riddled in all directions by the rain that, resting on them for a moment, has been then absorbed, and has carried forth through every crevice what it was able to dissolve. But even the masses of hardest texture are so soft that

the rain soaking into them and then running out at every perforation has furrowed the white face with its trickling tears.

The wood measures three miles in each direction, and a guide is needed through the labyrinth of galleries and masses of insulated rock, all buried in a wood of oaks, here and there cleared for mulberry plantations.

It lies beside the road from the station of S. Paul le Jeune to Les Vans, and reaches to the river Chassezac, that has cut its way through the plateau in a profound ravine. In fact, the same formation continues on the further side of the stream, but the shapes of the rocks assumed there are less eccentric. A guide lives in a cottage where a road to the right joins that coming from S. Paul, and he charges three francs for showing visitors the principal sights in the wood, five francs for a complete exploration.

The path, or track rather, changes direction at every moment, wriggling in and out among the rocks, over fallen masses, down descents where the brambles throw long streamers across one's path to arrest progress ; the thorns claw and rend ladies' dresses. But the turf is purple with violets, and the fantastic shapes of the rocks draw one forward in defiance of thorn and prickle.

Some rocks resemble monstrous beasts. Near the road are the Lion and the Bear, engaged in a wrestle. There are castles with windows and doors, pointed arches, a very orgy of natural architecture in which every style is represented. We pass through narrow rifts into which the sun never penetrates, arrive by long galleries at culs-de-sac, and are forced to retrace our steps. Everywhere cavities, grottoes, piercing the rock that glares white in the sun and almost blinds the eye.

We arrive in a great cirque, in the midst of which are mulberries. In and out, everywhere grow oaks and broom; suddenly we come forth upon the gaping chasm through which rolls the Chassezac. A narrow and dangerous path down a rift enables one to descend to the river.

By scrambling among fallen blocks, after having passed under a little natural arch, a tunnel is reached in which a score of persons might shelter from the rain. Then a path emerging into the light leads along a terrace above the abyss, and by climbing and sliding and clinging to the bushes La Gleyzasse (the Church) is reached, a rift and cavern, once inhabited, as has been proved by the discovery under the soil of flint weapons and fragments of pottery.

This is the best known of the caverns of Païolive. But the mysterious wood grows above a whole subterranean world of vaults and passages. The entrances to these grottoes are known only to the guide; they are hidden among bushes, and often they are pot-holes, wells that open without warning, and down which an incautious visitor might fall. Stones thrown in strike the sides with a sound that becomes ever feebler till they reach the unexplored bottom.

M. de Malbos describes some of these :—

“I visited as well a grotto forming a gallery, on a very rapid slope. I would not speak of it but that, entering it without a candle, I found that my right foot did not touch the ground; so I retraced my steps to light a candle, and thus illumined I saw with horror that I had had half my body suspended over a precipice, sustaining myself only by my left foot on a slide of loose stones.

“On ascending the river of Chassezac, on top of the



precipice one can reach the Grott of the Chouans. One descends, or rather jumps, down to it, where it opens on a precipice with a ledge before it. Down to this cave one has to climb with difficulty. It divides into several galleries, that are lighted by small cracks, visible at the height of one hundred feet above the Chassezac. It was in this grotto that seven Royalists, who had fled to it, were taken by means of fires of straw and sulphur lighted in the entrance. They were shot at a little distance from it. One only, Gavidel, managed to escape, having managed to breathe through the barrel of his gun, which he had unscrewed and thrust through one of the cracks I have mentioned."

Near the entrance to the wood is the group that goes by the name of the Lion and the Bear, already mentioned. There is a Lot's Wife, there is a nun, a sphynx, and so on. The Castle of the Trois Seigneurs does seem actually to have possessed a little fortress, built in and out among the spires of rock, for fragments of wall are worked into the fissures and surmount some of the points.

But perhaps the most remarkable spot is the Cros de la Perdrix, where the limestone is in a craggy jumble of all kinds of forms.

One enters this sort of fortified circus with precipitous sides by a noble rock, pierced by a natural arch, at the entry to a cleft, something like that of Gleyzasse—already described.

If we follow the edge of the ravine of the Chassezac we see the river gliding smoothly below through green pastures between sheer walls. On the promontory of Cornillon are the remains of an ancient village.

At the north-west of the wood is the hermitage of S. Eugène, at the fringe of the forest. It is as though

suspended above the valley, standing on the limestone, which here lies in narrow, almost horizontal beds. Architecturally it is nothing. Only a poor, ruinous, abandoned structure; no hermit has occupied it for many years.

According to tradition, for many generations the wood was inhabited by a family, the head of which assumed the title of King of Païolive. Louis XIV. was informed of the existence of this sovereign in a corner of his province of Languedoc, and ordered that the man should be arrested and tried. Several detachments of troops were sent to surround the wood and to explore its depths. No one was to be seen in it; all was silent, till a crack of a firearm sounded, and a man fell. After a quarter of an hour, those who had ventured into the labyrinth struggled out, but with the loss of ten of their number, each of whom had received a ball in his heart. The troops retired, and as there was no question of rebellion against royal authority or of religion, Louis was content to let the matter rest; only he succeeded in entering into communication with the petty king by means of the hermit of S. Eugène, and requiring of him as recognition of suzerainty annually a pair of part-ridges—a tribute, however, that was never paid. The succession of kings of Païolive continued till the Revolution, when it was not safe on French soil for any man to bear a royal title, and the last king, rather than run the risk of losing his head on the scaffold, assumed the red cap and sank into a plain citizen.

In 1792, the Royalist bands of the Count of Saillans took refuge in the wood of Païolive, confident that it would not be possible for the Republican troops to dislodge them, and their head-quarters was in the Grotto of

Gleyzasse, three hundred feet above the river. The Directory of Ardèche, however, found means of securing the conspirators when they met at the Château of Jalès, and they were taken to Les Vans and there put to death, the Count among them. Jalès had belonged to the Templars, but these, sacrificed by Clement V. to the cupidity of Louis the Fair, were taken to Aigues Mortes and there burnt alive on false charges. To the Templars succeeded the Knights of Malta. The most celebrated commander among these, who resided at Jalès, was the Bailli of Suffren, whom the vassals complained of as devouring forty pounds of meat in a day. But the Bailli was a fire-eater as well, and his exploits in the Mediterranean, fighting the English, form the theme of a ballad introduced by Mistral into "Mirèio." The Bailli was killed in a duel by the Marquess of Mirepoix, in 1788.

"Our Captain was Bailly Suffren ;  
We had sail'd from Toulon,  
Five-hundred seafaring Provençaux,  
Stout-hearted and strong :

'Twas the sweet hope of meeting the English that made our hearts  
burn,  
And till we had thrashed them we vowed we would never return."

And, of course, these stout-hearted Provençaux thrash the English like curs, just as our bluejackets always thrash the French—in ballads.

Between the wood and Berrias on the bare plateau are many dolmens.

On the lovely day in early spring upon which I visited the Bois de Païolive, the inventories were being taken in the churches of Banne and Berrias. As we drove to the wood the bell of Banne church

was pealing the alarm ; as we left, that of Berrias was sounding, and we drove thither. The village was occupied by soldiers, and these surrounded the church, and held every avenue, whilst a body of gendarmes with axes smashed the barricaded west door. Outside the village was an ambulance wagon, rendered necessary, as the people were offering a strenuous resistance. In the adjoining village of Beaulieu on the preceding day they had thrown quicklime in the faces of the assailants, and had blinded one soldier, who had to be conveyed to the hospital.

The hostility provoked by the Government by ordering the taking of the inventories of the contents of the churches is not very explicable, for there was no threat made of confiscation. The reasons given me were these. At the first Revolution every church had been pillaged and its treasures seized. Only in some cases had certain of these latter been saved before the sacred buildings were plundered, by being confided to the custody of reliable men in the parish, who restored them when the churches were reopened for divine worship. The people suppose that the taking of the inventories is a preliminary step to confiscation, and to protect the State against the secretion of any of the church treasures when that confiscation takes place. As, however, it is exceedingly unlikely that such a step will occur, the violent excitement over the taking of the inventories is not very reasonable. "We," say the people, "our fathers and grandsires, gave the furniture to the church ; it belongs to the Commune, and not to the State."

The attitude assumed by the bishops and curés has been diverse. Here the taking of the inventory has

been opposed by force, there permitted under protest. At Lodève, where very fine new wrought-iron gates have lately been added to the porch, the clergy took good care not to fasten them and expose them to be damaged, but bolted the inner door of wood, very thin, and easily cut through. That was the form of their protest. At Alais the curé received the State officials at the door and contented himself with reading a written remonstrance, after which he drew aside and allowed them to do their duty.

Actually, the curés in most places took no lead in the demonstrations, which were often organised by reactionaries so as to excite hostility to the Republic, in view of the approaching elections for the Chamber of Deputies. They failed utterly in their purpose, as the election, when it did take place, proved to demonstration. But in many a country place the resistance was due to the excited passions of the people ungoaded on by their superiors. A man said to me when I asked him the object of these futile resistances to authority : " Mais, il nous faut, à tout prix—des émotions."



## CHAPTER X

### THE RAVINE OF THE ALLIER

The Allier—Difficulty of ascent—Remarkable engineering of the line—Summer visitors—Difference between the Allier and the Ardèche—Langeac—Chanteuges—Disorderly monks—Fête on Whit-Sunday—The Lafayettes—The Margeride and its inhabitants—Sauges—The Drac—Church—Tour de la Clauze—Tomb of an English captain—La Voute-Chilhac—Basalt—Used on the roads—Monistrol d'Allier—S. Privat—Find of an oculist's tools—Alleyras—Bed of old lake—Langogne—Church—N. D. du Tout Pouvoir—the Vogue—Proprietorship *versus* tenancy—Pradelles—Delivered from the Huguenots—Château of De Belsunce—S. Alban—Cave—Trappist monastery—The Liborne—The rule of La Trappe.

I PASS now from the east to the west by direct flight from the Vivarais over the plateau of Le Puy to where the Allier descends into the plains from the lofty ridge of the southern Cevennes.

Almost from its source the Allier has met with difficulties. It has had to contend with granite, schist, and finally with basalt, and it has had to form for itself a ravine that widens into a valley below Langeac where are coal-beds.

That ravine is peculiarly tantalising, because it is difficult to explore satisfactorily. From Langeac a road runs up the riverside only till it encounters that from Sauges to S. Privat. Beyond that there is none. The line, indeed, does follow the stream, and it is of all French lines the most remarkable for the engineering



feats achieved. The road for the rails has been hewn as a cornice in the face of the cliff, every salient buttress has been bored through, and every inconvenient lateral gorge overleaped. In 132 kilometres (81 miles) from the confluence of the Dège with the Allier up to La Levade, there are ninety tunnels, which happens to be precisely the number of kilometres between those points as the crow flies.

Precisely this fact makes the ascent of the ravine by train prove so unsatisfactory. It consists in a rapid succession of flashes followed by darkness—a constant flutter, as it were, of the eyelid. Moreover, the tunnels are carried through the shoulders of the mountain, avoiding the finest parts of the cañon.

The only possible way of doing justice to the scenery is to halt at the little stations where poor villages have been planted at the opening of lateral ravines, and thence follow the river by a footpath as far as it will lead.

The ascent of the river by train is indeed one of the great curiosities of the country, and it will be done generally in this way till the authorities of the department undertake to drive a carriage-road up the gorge. It is true that the villages are few, the population small, and trade a negligible quantity at present. But the scenery and the coolness of the mountain air, and the abundance of crystal water, are drawing annually more and ever more from the sweltering plains of Languedoc and the burning zone of Provence to this region for the summer, and it is accordingly to be regretted that they are debarred by lack of roadway from exploring what is the most magnificent feature of the country.

I have described the cañon of the Ardèche; this of

the Allier is also a cañon, but they are as unlike as is a blonde beauty to one who is dark. They are both superb, but in manner totally different. The Allier runs through rough basalt and crystalline rocks; the Ardèche flows between bluffs of limestone. The latter can be descended in a boat, the Allier cannot. The Allier looks north—the colouring, the vegetation, the climate are northern; the Ardèche in every one of these particulars is southern. The Ardèche has cut its way through a level plateau; the Allier flows between ranges of mountains. The cañon of the Ardèche is a street; the defile of the Allier is a lane. We cannot seek the Ardèche in the height of summer; it is just then when we would refresh in the cool draughts and the blue shadows of the Allier.

The chasm of this latter river has been formed at the point of contact of the lava with the granite. The volcanoes of Le Velay poured forth their molten floods which beat against the granitic mass of the Margeride, and the lava in cooling may have shrunk and cracked and so allowed the river an opportunity of escaping into the plain. In places it has cut through granite and schist. It had cut this channel before the volcanic vents opened. What these latter did was to deposit what they threw out in the trough of the Allier, and force that stream to renew its work of excavation; in the latter part of its course the ravine is cut through lava.

Langeac will serve as a starting-point for visits if the tourist be not very particular as to accommodation. It does possess one passable inn, and that is at some distance from the station in the town. The place itself is of no great interest. It has manufactures, favoured by

the presence of coal-beds near at hand. The church, however, is curious. It consists of a nave without aisles, but with chapels between the buttresses, and with an apse, lined within with well-carved oak stalls of the sixteenth century; once occupied at Mass by canons, now by schoolboys. The tower is at the east end, and supports an octagonal campanile.

From Langeac Chanteuges is easily reached. It clusters about a basaltic hunch at the junction of the Dège with the Allier. The village creeps up the side of the hill, the summit of which is occupied by a church and the ruins of a priory. The original church was a fine example of Romanesque, but is now a sad jumble of styles; every age as it passed has left a trace on the building. The platform on which it stands is ascended by a zigzag path; basaltic prisms, range above range, form the mass of the rock.

The main entrance to the old priory is on the north, and was defended by a tower. On one of the blocks at the top of the wall may be read the date 1115. The monks had evidently converted their habitation into a fortress, and it was precisely this that led to their suppression and the dispersion of the fraternity.

One Iter de Maudulf, a knight who had led a lawless life, felt a twinge of compunction, and resolved on quitting the world and embracing a life of religion. Accordingly he assumed the cowl in Chanteuges. But the old Adam was not dead in him. *Cucullus non facit monachum*. The choir offices proved tedious, the meagre fare unacceptable, and the wine was vinegar. His temper gave way, and with it his good resolutions. He became restive. In the refectory he talked to the other monks of the good old days when he roistered and

roved over the country; ate and drank and did wild deeds of devilry. They listened; their mouths watered, and their fingers itched. Eventually Maudulf succeeded in corrupting the whole fraternity. The monks abandoned their reading and psalmody to fortify the height. Every night a diabolical horde issued from the gate of the monastery, clothed in mail armour under their serge habits. They swept the country, levied blackmail on the farmers, stopped and robbed merchants, and plundered the pilgrims bound for the shrine of Our Lady of Le Puy. In the dead of night they forced their way into convents, and romped and revelled with the nuns, or else carried off comely peasants' daughters *en croupe* to their stronghold at Chanteuges.

Of all the confraternity, the abbot alone kept his head; but his objurgations were disregarded, his authority was flouted. In despair he appealed to the Bishop of Clermont, who at once visited the monastery, but took the precaution of doing so at the head of a body of armed men. "I saw," said he, "the abbey in the most deplorable condition. The buildings were in ruins, the sanctuary was despoiled, the church converted into a fortress, no one serving God, the holy habitation transformed into a den of thieves and murderers."

Accordingly the monastery was suppressed, the monks dispersed among other houses, and the abbey converted into a priory under the rule and supervision of Chaisedieu. To the present day the belief prevails among the peasantry that in winter, at night, when a storm rages and the snow is driving, a black cavalcade issues from the gate, with cowls drawn over grinning skulls, and with serge habits flapping in the wind,

that it sweeps over the plateau till cock-crow, when it returns through the portal and vanishes.

East of the church is a little chapel of flamboyant character with richly sculptured doorway, surmounted by a representation of the Assumption. It is the sole specimen of this style in the department. At the Revolution it was converted into a haystore.

The fête at Chanteuges is on Whitsun Day, and has a peculiar observance. It begins in the *Pré du Fou*. This field may not be mown till after Pentecost. A beggar is induced to hide in the long grass. The youths of the parish, wearing hats decked with cock's feathers, march to the field in two files led by fifes and drums and preceded by a banner. The procession circles thrice about the field, and some of the young men detach themselves from it and beat it in search of the beggar. If they do not find him at once, others come to their aid. When the *fou* has been discovered, he is grasped by the legs, thrown on his back, and spun round once by each of the youths forming the procession. Then a pistol is discharged, the procession reforms, and the train mounts to the church, taking the poor fool along with it. There he is again thrown down and undergoes the same process of spinning. After this he is indemnified by a few coppers from each of the spinners, and every seller of cakes and buns who has a stall there is bound to supply him with sufficient food to satisfy his maw. The spinning over, the young men enter the church for Mass. At Chanteuges the festival of Pentecost is devoted partly to God, partly to dancing, partly to drinking. God is often forgotten, dancing sometimes, the bottle never.

Opposite Chanteuges is S. Arcons, where the Fioule



flows into the Allier. It rises among the pine-clad heights of Fix S. Genys, and receives the stream that issues from the Lake of Limagne, a volcanic basin like that of Bourget, but not of like regularity of outline.

Above Langeac is the land of the Lafayettes. They were great seigneurs in the Middle Ages. They derive from Gilbert Motier, lord of Lafayette, who was one of the great captains that drove the English out of France. He died in 1463, and was grandson of a Gilbert who fell on the field of Poitiers, 1356, also with his face set against the English. So Marie Jean Paul, the famous marquess, fought the English on the side of the Americans, 1777-1785. The Marquess was born at Chavagnac, 1757, on the tableland about the junction of lines at S. Georges d'Aurac. The castle was built in 1701.

From Langeac one can explore the granitic Margeride, peopled by a race distinct from the Cevenols. They are pale, often fair-headed and blue-eyed, grave, dignified, and intensely conservative. They are and ever have been sturdy Catholics, have never been shaken, even ruffled, by the shock to faith given by Calvin and his followers. Whereas a Cevenol is ready at all times for a prophecy, a revelation, a new doctrine, the upset of one that is old, taking up what is fresh with fanaticism, and then letting it drop and lapsing into indifference, the man of the Margeride remains as constant, as unmoved as his own rocky mountains. The Margeride, "as seen from the Pec Finiels, is a long black line drawn against the sky of central France, a wall without battlements, without towers, without a keep." It is in reality a long series of successive undulating plains high uplifted, covered with forests of oaks, beech and pines, or else with pastures



on which feed during the summer the sheep of Basse Languedoc and the oxen of the Camargue. It is composed of granite, and its loftiest points reach only 4,650 feet. A visitor will probably content himself with an expedition to Sauges, that lies in scenery called the Switzerland of the Margeride. The rich green swath, the dark pine-woods, the abundance of crystal rills contrast with the bare lava plain and mountain cones of Le Velay.

The Sauge stream falls in cascade over a dyke of trap that has been forced through a rent in the granite, near the farm of Luchadou, built on and out of the ruins of a castle. There a phantom horse, magnificently caparisoned, is said to be seen grazing. It neighs when it sees children approach, and invites them to mount its back, which will lengthen conveniently to accommodate as many as desire to have a ride. When the horse has received a full complement, it dashes into the river, and buck-jumps till it has flung all the riders against the rocks or into the pools.

One day when a couple of dozen children were on its back, as the steed was galloping towards the stream one little boy sang out "Gloria Patri," etc., whereby he was able to master the "Drac" and make it gallop round and round the field till exhausted, when it let the children descend unmolested. This is none other than the Irish Pooka. The celebrated fall of the Liffey, near Ballymore Eustace, is named Pool-a-Phooka, and precisely the same story is told there of a phantom horse as here at Sauges. The same also in North Wales of the Ceffyl-y-Dwyr, the water-horse of Marchlyn. Can this myth have originated and been told by the Celtic race before its separation into several

branches? I can see no other explanation of the puzzle.

The church at Sauges has an early and remarkable belfry. An immense arch, richly moulded, admits to a porch. Above this is a still larger relieving arch to sustain the octagonal tower that is on two stages. Granite and black basalt are employed in bands and in the arches of the windows, two-light in the tower story, single in that above, and the whole is capped by a dwarf spire.

Near Sauges is the Tour de la Clauze, erected on a protuberant mass of granite fissured into blocks. The rest of the castle is completely ruined. But that which is most curious at Sauges is a monumental structure composed of a cubical base, on which stand four pillars supporting arches and a vault with groined ribs. This goes by the name of the Tombeau du Général Anglais, and is supposed to have been set up in honour of a Captain MacHarren, who commanded one of the mixed companies of English and Gascons that held the land or harried it for the English Crown nominally, actually for themselves. This MacHarren was probably one of the English garrison that held Sauges till 1360, when they were driven out by the Viscount Polignac.

La Voute-Chilhac down the river stands on a peninsula between the Allier and the Avesne that here debouches into it. It possesses a church of the fifteenth century that has taken the place of one erected by S. Odilo of Cluny in 1075. The original door-valves remain, but injured by cutting to make them fit the ogee portal. In the midst it bears the inscription:—

*“Hic tibi rex regum hoc condidit Odilo templum  
Agminibus superis quem miscuit arbiter orbis.”*

There were other inscriptions, but they have been mutilated. Chilhac stands on a rock composed in the lower portion of beautiful prismatic columnar basalt, capped with an amorphous flow. It is curious how sharp the line of demarcation is between the two beds. The situation is pretty, the church Romanesque.

The course of the Allier above Langeac presents many faces like organ fronts of basalt; in places the pillars form a *pavé de géants*. The prisms are employed along the roads to mark distances, and might easily be supposed to have been specially cut for the purpose. But all lava does not crystallise into prisms; under pressure it does. When not squeezed by superincumbent beds it is cinderous. But there is another form it assumes, that of phonolith or clinkstone, flakes that can be cut like slates and divided into laminae. As slates they are employed extensively in Velay. But why the ejected lava should form films here and prismatic pillars there, I do not comprehend.

At Monistrol d'Allier the Ance du Sud comes in from the Margeride after traversing a picturesque gorge. Here may be studied a fine basaltic face, called Escluzels. There are grottoes in the neighbourhood excavated in the tufa by the hand of man, but when is not known. A chapel dedicated to the Magdalen has been scooped out of the rock, but given a frontage of wall, and is an object of pilgrimage on the Sunday following July 22nd, when and where may be seen some of the costumes of the neighbourhood not yet wholly discarded.

On the opposite bank of the Allier is S. Privat, where the stream of Bouchoure comes down writhing between high precipices. The tower of Rochegude occupies the

summit of a peak 1,500 feet high, commanding the river and the roads. In 1865 a discovery was made at S. Privat of a cache of a Roman oculist of the third century. Along with his little store of coins lay his delicate instruments, and a cube as well, bearing on each face the name of one of the medicaments employed by him, and the cube used probably by him for sealing up his packets. The man seems to have known his business, or at all events of having both instruments and remedies not by any means barbarous. On reaching Alleyras the valley opens into a basin. Above the little town shoots up a mass of rock looking like a gigantic thumb as we approach from the north, but changing form as Alleyras is passed. It is actually a huge slab of rock that is detached from the mountain by a wide fissure.

The basin of Alleyras was once a lake, where the river paused to rest before it renewed its efforts to break a way through the lava. From this point upwards the scenery is less savage and gloomy. At Chapeauroux the railway describes a great curve, and pursues its way through tunnel and over viaduct till it draws up at Langogne, a busy little town of the Gevaudan, of some commercial importance. A monastery was founded here in 998 by Stephen Count of the Gevaudan, and Silvester II. presented to it the relics of SS. Gervasius and Protasius, and further conferred on the town the more than doubtful privilege of being out of episcopal jurisdiction, to be looked after or let alone by the Holy See only. The place suffered severely in the Hundred Years War, and again and worse even in those of religion. From 1562 for nearly a century and a half the Gevaudan was devastated turn and turn

about by Protestants and Catholics, and Langogne passed from the hands of one party to those of the other. In 1568 the Huguenots sacked the town and set fire to the church and monastery.

The church comprises a nave and side aisles, and is substantially in the Romanesque style, but with many alterations. There are three arcades resting on piers with engaged columns in granite, with capitals carved to represent fruit, acanthus leaves, and the seven deadly sins. A pretty flamboyant doorway replaces the western porch, which had been destroyed. Over it is a window in the same style. On the right of the entrance a doorway, that seems to give access only to a passage, communicates with a chapel below the soil, dimly lighted, and containing an image of N. D. de tout Pouvoir, supposed to have been given by Agelmodis, the widow of the founder of church and monastery. It was accorded a crown in 1900 by the Pope, and the anniversary of this ceremony, July 29th, is kept as a fête at Langogne. But the great festival in the town is on the Sunday following June 19th, when is the *vogue*, in honour of the two patrons, Gervasius and Protasius. On that occasion cars are drawn through the streets bearing groups of allegorical figures; but the special sport of the day is the "chute d'eau." A species of gallows is erected in the main street, with a vessel full of water balanced in the middle. The young men vie with one another as to who by throwing a stick can upset the vessel, and then dash under it so speedily as not to be splashed by the falling water. He who succeeds receives a prize.

Langogne is becoming annually more and more a summer resort. The Languiron here flows into the



Allier; it does not fill its bed, which is the receptacle for the refuse from the abattoir and the town, and the odours arising from these dejections infect the otherwise pure mountain air.

It is doubtless excellent in principle that every man should be able to dwell under his own fig tree and inhabit his own house; but this has its drawbacks. The theory may be sound, yet the results other than those anticipated. In England, where most householders are tenants, if a slate be blown off the landlord is applied to. If the putty be cracked that retains a window-pane, the landlord must see to it less the glass fall out. If the plaster scales off in one patch the size of a leaf, the landlord must replaster the whole face of the house. If the rats have gnawed through the floor, "Please, squire, have the boards relaid lest my child puts its leg through." If the well be contaminated, he is called upon to clear it, under the threat of complaint to the Local Government Board. But in France, where every man owns his own habitation, the habitations are allowed to fall into a ragged and measly condition. If a slate be carried away, the *patron* tells his wife to put a basin where it can catch the drip whenever it rains. If the putty falls from the glass, the pane is retained by the gummed border of postage stamps, renewed when necessary. If the rats have eaten through the floor, the child must learn to avoid the hole; it affords a useful lesson in circumspection. If the plaster peels away in masses from the front of the house, "Shall I squander money in titivating it?" asks the owner. "My relatives would consign me to an asylum as incapable of managing my affairs." And as for the well, M. le propriétaire says to himself, "*I never*



drink water, only wine. If some of my children get diphtheria, it will leave more money for those who survive."

This it is that gives to so many of the towns and nearly every village in France a palsied, neglected look, as if the houses had lost their self-respect, like a man who has gone down in the world and sunk to be a tramp.

Pradelles is four miles from Langogne, built in an amphitheatre on the flanks of the mountains of Le Velay, surrounded by rich meadows, from which it derives its name (*pratellæ*). The many Prades that occur in the south are all so called from the *pratæ* that spread about them. In 1588 Chambaud, at the head of a large body of Huguenots, besieged the town. As it had but a scanty garrison, he shouted to those on the walls, "Ville prise, ville gagnée!" To which a young woman called back, "Pa'ncaro!" (not yet) and flung a great stone at him which broke in his skull. This act of heroism saved Pradelles from being sacked and its citizens from massacre. The memory of that woman, Jeanne de Verdette, is still green there, and in 1888 the third centenary of the deliverance was commemorated at Pradelles.

At Naussac, in the opposite direction, on a granite tableland that goes by the name of the Kidney of Lozère, is an ancient house with a tower that formed a portion of the château of Mgr. de Belsunce, the brave Bishop of Marseilles, who was so devoted in his attentions to the plague-stricken in the terrible pestilence of 1720, which carried off forty thousand of its population. S. Alban-en-Montagne is four miles from Langogne in the department of Ardèche. It lies high—3,565 feet.

On the face of an enormous basaltic rock is a remarkable cave divided into several chambers, and large enough to contain all the villagers. It was employed as a place of refuge during the wars of feudal times, and again in those of religion. Access to it is not easy. As the railway reaches the watershed, barricades on both sides protect it from snow-drifts. Luc is passed, having an old castle on a rock, the donjon braced to sustain a colossal statue of the Virgin. Then the train halts at La Bastide, where is a branch line to Mende.

The Trappist monks have an establishment near this on these bleak heights. Their buildings are tasteless. Hitherto the monks have been left unmolested by Government, due possibly to the fact that they receive and examine the silkworm moths that have laid their eggs, sent to them from great distances round, to examine if they are free from the disease that so fatally threatened the silk industry in the Cevennes.

The breaking out of this complaint caused consternation some years ago, and M. Pasteur was sent down to investigate it. He found that no remedial efforts availed, and that the sole way of getting rid of the disorder was to stamp it out. Accordingly every moth after it has laid its eggs is enclosed along with the seed that has been deposited in a muslin bag and sent to be inspected. Each bag is numbered and ticketed with the name of the sender. The body of the moth is pounded up and submitted to examination under a powerful microscope, and this reveals the presence of the germs of *fibrine* if they exist. Should these be detected, the eggs of that particular moth are destroyed by fire.

In addition to this service rendered by the Trappists,

they have shown the peasantry of the High Cevennes how to improve the quality of the land by the use of lime and artificial manures, and they have also improved the breed of the sheep and cattle.

But these are side products of monachism, and they are benefits that might just as well be rendered by laymen; and, in fact, the examination of the silkworm moths is carried out in laboratories established for the purpose in some of the large towns of Languedoc.

The Trappist Order is the severest of all. The members are condemned never to speak, never to eat meat or fish, are denied even butter and oil. They have but two meals a day, and these of vegetables only. They never take off their garments to wash or to sleep, and do not wear linen. They go to bed at 8 p.m. in the summer, at 7 p.m. in winter, and rise at 2 a.m., but have no meal of any sort till midday. Every day part of their duty is to dig a portion of their future grave.

In Quarles' *Hieroglyphics of the Life of Man*, published in 1635, is an emblem of a dark lantern placed on a coffin and the sun in total eclipse, and this is above a poem, of which I give two stanzas :—

“Was it for this, the breath of Heav'n was blown  
 Into the nostrils of this heavenly creature?  
 Was it for this, that the sacred Three in One  
 Conspired to make this quintessence of Nature?  
 Did heav'nly Providence intend  
 So rare a fabric for so poor an end?

“Tell me, recluse monast're, can it be  
 A disadvantage to thy beams to shine?  
 A thousand tapers may gain light from thee :  
 Is thy light less or worse for light'ning mine?  
 If wanting light I stumble, shall  
 Thy darkness not be guilty of my fall?





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PEASANTS OF THE CAUSSES

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CAMISARDS

The country of the Camisards—Revocation of the Edict of Nantes—Shepherdess and angel—Corbière—Gabriel Astier—Excitement in the Boutières—Expectations of help from England—Prophecies—Murder of Tirbon—Prophetic gifts at Porchères—Attack of Cheilaret—What the prophetic gift really was—Isabeau Charras—Vivens—Battle of Florac—Assassinations—Correspondence with Schomberg—Capture of Vivens—Peace of Ryswick—Second outbreak of prophetic ecstasies—Children prophets—Cruelties—Break-up of meetings—Massacre of Creux de Vaie—Durand Fage—The Abbé du Chayla—Séguier—Pont de Montvert—Fresh murders—Séguier taken and burnt—Catinat—Murder of Saint Cômes—Laporte—Roland—Additional murders—Battle of Ste. Croix—Four degrees of inspiration—The prophet Clary passes through fire—Fight at Mas de Gaffard—Death of Captain Poul—Moussac—Jean Cavalier—Defeat of Du Roure—Rout of Camisards—Flight of Cavalier—Massacre of Chamborigaud—La Tour de Belot—Battle of Ste. Chatte—Marshal Villars—Change of tactics—Submission of Cavalier—Cessation of prophecy—What produced the prophetic exaltation.

WE are now drawing near to the country of the Camisards, and I must give a brief sketch of the rise of the movement due to prophets and prophetesses, its culmination in revolt, and its suppression.

The Edict of Nantes had been revoked; shoals of Huguenots had left France, where the exercise of their religion was no longer tolerated; the temples had been levelled with the dust, the pastors arrested, imprisoned, and executed. Those who escaped to Geneva or Holland exhorted such of their flock as remained to



continue steadfast to their convictions and to their prejudices. In the spring of 1668, near Castres, a shepherdess, aged ten, had a vision of an angel, who forbade her to attend Mass. The news spread everywhere, and crowds went to see the girl and hear her narrative from her own lips. This was the first manifestation, but it was not till twenty years had elapsed that such became common. A preacher, Corbière, from the same district, by some trickery caused two angels armed with sticks to enter the assembly where he was haranguing and to well thrash and expel such as had attended Mass. The intendant of the province sent his agents to take him. Corbière was surprised whilst holding a meeting in a wood. He drew a circle about him with a stick, and thundered, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" The dragoons hesitated, but the commandant shot him through the head.

Now appeared in Dauphiné la belle Isabeau, a shepherdess of about seventeen, who went into trances and preached and prophesied when in them. When she emerged from one of these ecstasies she remembered nothing about what she had said and done when in it. Usually to prophesy she lay on a bed, and this was the position almost always adopted by the prophets and prophetesses who succeeded her.

She was arrested and imprisoned, but treated with the utmost kindness, well fed, and visited daily by good charitable ladies. Under this influence, and when well nourished, her fits became fewer, and finally totally left her. Then she married a lusty young peasant, and ceased to be of consequence in the movement.

Meanwhile a pastor, Jurieu, from the place of his exile, Rotterdam, had proclaimed himself to be in-

spired. He had a medal struck with "Jurius Propheta" on it, and largely circulated in the Cevennes. Moreover, he printed his prophecies in 1686, and they passed from hand to hand. In them he announced that the Papacy would fall in the year 1690, and that the Reformation would be established throughout France.

But the spirit was not quenched when la belle Isabeau gave up prophesying. It broke out in a peasant of twenty-two named Gabriel Astier, of Clieu. His first solicitude was to communicate the spirit to his father, his mother, and his sisters; then he inoculated his neighbours and all the inhabitants of his village. Finding himself an object of pursuit by the police, he escaped over the Rhône into the Vivarais, and, followed by a troupe of prophets and prophetesses, he went through the Boutières. His words propagated the agitation; men, women, and children went into fits and preached and announced the future. The epidemic passed through the country with the rapidity of a fire driven by the wind. No preacher, even at the time when the inspiration was at its height, possessed the power over crowds that Astier exercised.

Vast multitudes attended his assemblies in the mountains, and the meetings were always held in places which commanded a view of the country round, so that they might be dispersed in the event of the dragoons being seen to approach. Often the wandering multitude remained for many days away from their homes, feeding on apples and chestnuts. Nothing like it had been seen since John the Baptist drew crowds to the banks of the Jordan, or the Son of Man had preached in the wilderness of Judea.

The theme of the preacher was always the same:

“Repent ; do penance for having attended Mass.” And the thrilled congregation fell on the ground, screaming out, “Pardon, Lord, O pardon !”

At this very time it was that the Revolution occurred in England, when James II. fled and the nation summoned William of Orange to the throne. William, it must be remembered, drew his title from the Principality of Orange, which he held, and this adjoined Dauphiné, where the prophetic afflatus had first been felt. It was concluded as certain that William would come to the aid of his afflicted co-religionists. Astier was so confident, that he ventured to predict the day on which William would arrive at the head of an army of a hundred thousand men, led by an exterminating angel. Then all the levelled temples would sprout up, built without hands, and the Catholic churches which had replaced them would go off in a puff of smoke. A star would fall from heaven on Babylon and consume the papal chair. He assured his hearers that God had made them invulnerable, so that neither sword nor ball could hurt them. Another prophet, named Palette, made the same assurances to the Calvinists, and as he and his congregation came upon a Captain Tirbon with his soldiers, they rushed on them, flinging stones, and killed the captain and nine of his soldiers, but not till some of the elect had fallen.

This event alarmed Colonel Folleville, in command of the troops in the province.

M. de Broglie, brother-in-law of Bâville, intendant of Languedoc, went to Porchères where he heard that a religious assembly was to be held. In this hamlet lived a poor old man named Paul Béraut, who had for long resisted the Spirit ; but one day he heard his children

tell of the marvels that took place in the assemblies, and all at once a convulsion shook him; he jumped up in bed, pulled down the canopy of the four-poster and flung it into the middle of the room, uttering incoherent words. This sublime victory of the Spirit over their father filled his children with joy. They ran through the village, entering every house, saying, "Come and see our father who has received the Spirit, and is prophesying!" The old man was in wild excitement when M. de Broglie arrived in the village. Béraut and his eldest daughter Sarah, at the head of all those who had been listening to his prophetic utterances, rushed on de Broglie and his troop, throwing stones. The soldiers retaliated, the new-made prophet and a dozen others were killed, and Sarah was taken prisoner.

Folleville, learning that Gabriel Astier was holding an assembly on the height of Cheilaret, surrounded the mountain. As soon as the dragoons were seen, Astier harangued the faithful: "Children of God, be without fear. I promise you that your bodies will be as adamant against ball and sabre. The angels of the Lord will fight for us."

Before attacking, Folleville sent the provost of his regiment to urge the fanatics to disperse and return to their duty. He was met with shouts of "Tartara! Get thee behind me, Satan!" The cry of Tartara was supposed to have the power to paralyse the enemy. Then one of the Calvinists rushed upon the provost and pelted him with stones, so that he was forced to fly. Folleville, reluctant to proceed to extremities, sent another parliamentary to the crowd; he was received with a volley of stones. The fanatics could be seen breathing on one another to communicate the gift of

the Spirit to all. Then they marched in a solid body against the soldiers, shouting Tartara! Some were armed with guns, most carried large stones. They fought valiantly, but their ranks were broken; three hundred were left dead on the field, fifty who were wounded were taken to Privas, and those who recovered were hung.

The prophetic inspiration was really nothing more than an epidemic malady, such as is found among the North American Indians, the tribes in Siberia, and such as broke out among the early Quakers and Wesleyans. It is a nervous disorder, as natural as chicken-pox, though not so common. Roman Catholic nuns have it, so had the pagan prophetesses of old.

Some Calvinist women professed to have received the gift of shedding tears of blood, and showed the crimson streaks washing their cheeks. This was by no means necessarily a fraud. Roman Catholic ecstasies have had the same, and the stigmata as well.

Fléchier, a contemporary, thus describes the ecstasy of Isabeau Charras, one of the principal prophetesses, and not to be confounded with la belle Isabeau. He gives it from the relation of an ecclesiastic who with some friends entered her cottage to see what really took place.

“ Ils furent surpris du spectacle qui s’offrit à leurs yeux. La prophétesse était couchée à la renverse dans une cuisine, les jambes nues et l’estomac tout à fait découvert. Tous les assistants, à genoux autour d’elle, étaient attentifs à ces pieuses nudités. Le prêtre voulut faire quelque remontrance à la fille, mais la mère indignée lui dit: ‘Quoi! malheureux que tu êtes, vous ne respectez pas ma fille qui a le Saint Esprit dans l’estomac!’ ”

Gabriel Astier was finally taken and broken on the wheel in 1690.

François Vivens was a wool-comber of Valleraux, a small man and lame, but with a robust and indefatigable body. He had gone to Holland, but, on the accession of William to the English throne, felt so confident that the Prince of Orange would bring all the power of his kingdom to assist the Calvinists of Languedoc, that he returned thither. When he arrived in the Cevennes he found the people agitated by the spirit of prophecy. He was the first to organise rebellion. He exhorted to it, and collected arms, manufactured powder, and cast bullets. He soon had four hundred men under arms, and he met Bâville and de Broglie near Florac at the head of a considerable body. A fight ensued. Vivens was obliged to fly and hide in a wood; he lost three men killed, and some prisoners, who were hung next day.

Bâville executed several persons charged with having given him shelter. To revenge this Vivens, with his own hand, killed the curé of Conguérac, and had the priest of S. Marcel and the vicaire stabbed and four officers assassinated, either in their houses or on the roads. "This Cevenol," says Peyrat in his *Histoire des Pasteurs du Desert*, "had in his soul something of the Tishbite who had four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal slain by the brook of Carmel."

Whilst Vivens was ordering these bloody reprisals he was carrying on a correspondence with Schomberg, late Marshal of France, who was at this time in Savoy in command of a regiment of refugee Protestants. He proposed to Schomberg a plan. He was to raise an army of several thousands, make a sudden descent on Aigues-



Mortes, march across the plain, and join hands with the Cevenols. The correspondence was intercepted, and Bâville, seeing he had to do with a dangerous man, put a price on his head.

A preacher named Languedoc, a companion of Vivens, was arrested, and made revelations—amongst others that Vivens had converted four dragoons, who kept him informed of every movement of the royal troops. These men were taken, and one betrayed where Vivens hid, in a cave. The commandant of Alais with a body of soldiers went to the place, which was not far off. The cavern was in a rock that had to be surmounted, and descent to the cave was by a narrow path. Vivens, who was there with two of his lieutenants, was only aware of his danger when the enemy were close at hand. His first assailant, a sergeant, he shot as he descended. Vivens had several guns loaded that were passed out to him by his companions. He killed two more soldiers and wounded the lieutenant, but was himself shot by a man who had succeeded in creeping down in his rear. All but one of the pastors in the Cevennes, Pierre Roman, had been captured and hung. The death of Vivens and the peace of Ryswick deprived the Calvinists there of hope of assistance from the Protestant powers, and resistance ceased. However, although all seemed quiet, the authorities redoubled their measures of severity. Everywhere new excesses of cruelty were committed by the governors of the provinces, the judges and the provosts of the mounted police, against poor creatures who desired only to be let alone to serve God according to their dim lights.

“In 1700,” says Court, the historian of the Camisards, “the country groaned with the crowds languishing in prison

and in irons. In April a chain of sixty-three were sent to the galleys, whose only crime was fidelity to and zeal for their religion, and among them were several fathers of families with grey heads."

The death of Charles II., King of Spain, at the close of 1700, roused expectations of a new foreign war, into which England and Holland would be drawn to take part with Austria against France. The news of the War of Succession breaking out, spread through the provinces, and revived the hopes of the Reformed; the spirit of prophecy that had languished since the execution of Gabriel Astier burst forth again. At the end of that year, 1700, an old maid who earned her livelihood by tailoring in the villages on the Ardèche brought the prophetic gift into the Cevennes. She communicated it to a number of young boys and girls, and they in turn transmitted it to the population of the mountains. This was done by wild gesticulation, loud invocation of the Spirit, and by breathing into the mouths of those who were to be inspired. The winter had not passed before the epidemic had spread with astounding rapidity, and prophets prophesied by the thousands. Women and children were especially liable to take the contagion. It was calculated that as many as eight thousand children in the Cevennes preached and prophesied. The Governor of Languedoc had a number of them arrested and put in prison, and required the faculty of medicine at Montpellier to examine into the nature of the phenomenon. The doctors observed, discussed, wrangled, and produced an opinion that these children were *fanatics*. That was the sum of what they had to say.

Bâville released the youngest of the children, but

sent the rest either to the galleys or to serve in the army. He announced that he would hold the parents responsible for their offspring who prophesied, and that they should be fined. Dragoons were quartered upon those who could not cure their children or prevent them from taking this epidemic. Things went so far that some parents denounced their own children so as to shelter themselves from these violent measures. They handed them over to the magistrates, and said, "There, take them, and do with them what you will; cure them if you can."

But the spirit of prophecy did not remain with the children, it communicated itself to their elders. Bâville had such arrested as he could lay hold on and hung or sent them to the galleys.

But in spite of these cruelties, or rather in consequence of them, the prophets multiplied more and more. The prospect of the gallows, the wheel, or the galleys only served to fire their zeal to madness.

The number and importance of the assemblies increased, and the Governor of Languedoc began to deal with hearers as he had with prophets. In October, 1701, he sent a company to disperse one of these meetings near Alais. Three of the audience, unable to escape in time, were broken on the wheel. But the most atrocious of these executions was that of Creux de Vaie, in the Vivarais. The massacre was so great that, beside the bodies left on the field, a boat and two wagons were laden with the wounded who were taken captive, and these were conveyed to Montpellier. Among them was a prophet with his four sons. The prophet was hung, one son died of his wounds in prison, three were sent to the galleys; and his house was torn

down. Thus, in one day, the wife was deprived of husband, children, home, and substance.

Throughout the Cevennes spirits were stirred with expectation of a great deliverance. A prophetess announced that the millennium was at hand. A prophet declared that a ladder was about to be let down from heaven.

In February, 1702, Durand Fage was at an assembly, carrying arms. The prophetess Marguerite Bolle, aged twenty-three, fell into an ecstasy, and announced that the sword of Durand would smite the enemies of the truth hip and thigh. Later on the great prophets of the mountains, Abraham Mazel, Solomon Couderc, and Pierre Séguier, received similar revelations.

The Abbé du Chayla, archpriest and inspector of missions in the Cevennes, had a house in which he sometimes dwelt at Pont-de-Montvert. He had been a missionary in China, and had there suffered martyrdom, was left for dead, and brought back to life by the charity of a poor Chinese. One Massys, a muleteer, was guiding a party of fugitives who were escaping to Geneva, and on him, with his convoy, consisting mostly of women dressed as men, Du Chayla laid his hands. He was a cruel man; he plucked out the beards and eyebrows with pincers, he put live coals into the hands of his victims and then forced them to clench their fists. Sometimes he surrounded their fingers with cotton steeped in oil and set fire to it.

On the Sunday following the capture of the convoy there was a gathering of the Protestants in the woods of Altefage, on Mount Bougès, when Séguier fell into ecstasy and prophesied. He was a wool-carder, tall, black-faced, and toothless, but a man full of energy

and self-confidence. He declared that the Spirit announced that arms must be taken, the prisoners at Pont-de-Montvert delivered, and the priest of Moloch destroyed.

On July 24th, 1702, at half-past ten at night, were heard at Pont-de-Montvert strains of distant psalmody drawing nearer and nearer ; it was Esprit Séguier, the terrible prophet, who was on his way with fifty-three of his men, and as they marched they sang Marot's psalm—

“ Nous as-tu rejeté, Seigneur, sans espérance  
De ton sein paternel ?  
N'apaiseras-tu pas, après tant de souffrances,  
Ton courroux éternel ?  
Sion, qui dut avoir l'éclat et la durée  
Du céleste flambeau,  
Regarde, hélas ! Seigneur, ta Sion adorée  
N'est qu'un vaste tombeau ! ”

Du Chayla heard the chant, and did not trouble himself much about it. He went to the window and saw the assembled crowd. “Get away with you!” he shouted ; “dogs of Huguenots !”

But the door was burst in by a beam of wood driven against it, and the house was invaded. The fanatics occupied the ground floor. Du Chayla and his men held the staircase. “Children of God !” shouted the prophet, “let us set fire to the house of Baal and burn it and its priest.” The flames spread. Du Chayla and his men lowered themselves into the garden by means of knotted sheets ; some escaped across the river under the fire of the insurgents, but the Inspector of Missions fell and broke his thigh, and could only crawl among some bushes. The Calvinists went through the house shouting for his blood. Finding on the staircase a

priest who had not escaped, they murdered him. They hunted for their arch-enemy, and at last, by the light of the flames, found him. To the last he maintained his composure. "If I be damned," said he, "will you damn yourselves also?" Séguier gave the order, and he was despatched, in the *place* of the little town to which they dragged him. According to Brueys, Séguier fell into an ecstasy, and offered Du Chayla his life if he would apostatise. The priest peremptorily refused. "Then die," said the prophet, and stabbed him. Then began a horrible scene. All the insurgents one after another approached, and driving their weapons into the bleeding body, reproached Du Chayla for some of the barbarities he had committed. "This thrust," said one, "is for my father, whom you caused to be executed on the wheel." "And this for my brother," said another, "whom you sent to the galleys." "And this for my mother," exclaimed a third, as he ran his sword through the body, "who died of grief." The body of the Abbé du Chayla received fifty-three stabs, every one of which he had richly deserved. But the astounding thing in the whole story is that he, a man who had suffered all but absolute martyrdom for the Faith in China, should not have seen that barbarities could not turn a soul from one conviction to another.

Séguier and his companions employed the remainder of the night in prayer, kneeling around the corpses. They had murdered all found in the house, except the prisoners whom they had released, one soldier and a servant. When dawn broke they retired in good order, still singing, and ascended the Tarn to Frugères. When the last notes of their psalmody died away, two Capuchins who had managed to conceal themselves in a



cellar of one of the houses in the town, crept from their retreat and carried off the body of Du Chayla to the church of S. Germain de Colberte, for burial.

But during the funeral a cry was heard outside, "The insurgents are coming! Frugères, S. Maurice, S. André de Lancize, have been given up to fire and massacre!" At once all the assembled clergy fled for their lives, and some did not stay their feet till they had found refuge behind the walls of Alais.

However, the storm that threatened to break over S. Germain rolled away to the west.

Séguier, whose name in the patois signifies The Mower, had assumed the appellation of Esprit, as he deemed himself a channel through whom the Holy Spirit spoke. He was subject to frequent ecstasies, and he had no doubt but that it was due to direct inspiration that he was prompted to the deeds of blood of which he was guilty. It is deserving of note that when he or any of the prophets and prophetesses gave forth their oracles it was never in their own names. They always spoke as if the Holy Spirit were uttering commands through their mouths, as, "I, the Spirit of God, command."

Whilst the funeral of Du Chayla was in progress, actually Séguier, followed by a band of thirty men singing psalms, had entered Frugères and shot the parish priest. They went on to S. Marcel, but thence the vicaire had escaped. At S. André the curé, hearing of the approach of the band, rang the alarm bell. Séguier's men pursued him, flung him out of a belfry window, and then hacked him to death. The schoolmaster was also murdered and his body mutilated. Wherever he went Séguier destroyed the crosses and every emblem

of Catholicism. On the night of the 29th July the band surrounded the Castle of Ladevèse, where was a store of arms taken from the Protestants. When summoned to deliver them up, the seigneur replied by a volley which killed two men. The insurgents, furious at their loss, broke in and massacred all the inhabitants of the château, not sparing even a mother aged eighty, or a young girl who on her knees prayed for her life.

The authorities, in serious alarm, took immediate measures to repress the insurrection, and gave the command of the troops to a Captain Poul, who managed to capture Esprit Séguier, and The Mower was tried at Florac and sentenced to have his hand cut off and then to be burnt alive. On August 12th, 1702, Séguier underwent his sentence at Pont-de-Montvert. Neither the blow of the axe nor the violence of the flames could draw from him a cry or a groan. He shouted from his pyre, "Brethren, await and hope in the Eternal One! Carmel that is desolate will flourish; Lebanon that is left barren will blossom as a rose."

The command of the insurgents, who now were given the name of Camisards by their enemies, but called themselves the Children of God, was assumed by Laporte, an ironmonger. He was joined by Castanet, a forester of the Aigoual, by Jean Cavalier, a baker's boy, and by Abdias Morel, an old soldier, who went by the name of Catinat, on account of his admiration for the general of that name; also by the two arch-prophets, Abraham Mazel and Solomon Couderc. Many other prophets and prophetesses joined the band, and excited it to undertake the most daring enterprises.

The execution of Séguier was avenged on the follow-

ing day. The band, knowing that the Baron de Saint-Cômes, who was especially obnoxious to them as a convert to the Church from Calvinism, was going in his carriage to Calvisson, Catinat and six of his men laid an ambush for him, stopped the carriage, blew out the brains of the baron, and murdered his valet.

The insurrection spread rapidly. Laporte declared: "The God of Hosts is with us! We will thunder forth the psalm of battle, and from the Lozère to the sea all Israel will rise." His prediction was fulfilled; the revolt extended from the mountains to the plain, even to the shores of the Mediterranean. Laporte had sent his nephew Roland into lower Languedoc to collect recruits. Circumstances favoured his project. Executions had multiplied of persons merely suspected of having attended the religious assemblies, so that the Calvinists alarmed fled their homes and in great numbers joined the bands of insurgents. The Camisards next caught and killed the secretary of Du Chayla, the prior of S. Martin, and Jourdan, a militia captain who had shot Vivens. Panic fell on the Catholics; fifteen churches were in flames, and great numbers of the curés had fled.

On October 22nd, 1702, being a Sunday, Captain Poul and his corps, led by a traitor, surprised Laporte on a hill at Ste. Croix with a body of the faithful. Laporte had barely time to marshal his men for defence. Unfortunately for him a heavy rain came on that disabled their guns; only three could be fired. Poul, who saw the disadvantage, charged with impetuosity. Laporte fell shot through the heart, but the Children of God effected their retreat without disorder, having left nine of their comrades dead on the field.

Roland, nephew of Laporte, now assumed the command. He had served in the army under Catinat in the campaigns of the Alps, and had consequently acquired military experience in mountainous country. Roland was a middle-sized man with a robust constitution; he had a broad face marked by small-pox, large grey eyes, flowing brown hair. He was naturally grave, silent, imperious, and was aged twenty-five.

The Catholics in derision called him Count Roland, but he assumed the title of General of the Children of God. It was not his military experiences or capacity that gave the young chief the ascendancy over his co-religionists, but his prophetic ecstasies. There were four degrees of inspiration. The first was the Announcement, or Call; the second was the Breathing. Those who had received the *breath* were highly regarded, but not considered capable of becoming leaders. The third degree was Prophecy, and such as had this were regarded as vehicles for the communication of the will of God. But the highest of all was the Gift. Those who had received this could work miracles; they disdained to prophesy, but were supposed to be exalted into personal communication with God. Roland had passed through all these degrees.

There were now five legions of insurgents under their several captains, but all subject to the supreme control of Roland. This remarkable man now set to work to collect the material of war. He created magazines, powder mills, arsenals, and even hospitals in the caverns that abound in the Cevennes, notably in the limestone mountains. He also required all his co-religionists to pay a tax in money or goods for the maintenance of the army. He formed wind and water

mills on heights or by streams, and as the chestnut woods produced abundance of food there was little fear of starvation. When the hosts were assembled the prophets prophesied, and pointed out men here and there whom they declared to be false brethren; these men were at once led aside and summarily shot.

On one occasion a prophet, Clary, pointed out two traitors and demanded their execution. Cavalier had them bound, but a good many of those present murmured and expressed doubts. Clary, who was in a condition of delirious elevation, cried out: "Oh, men of little faith! Do you doubt my power? I will that ye light a great fire, and I say to thee, my son, that I will carry thee unhurt through the flames." The people cried out that they no longer needed the ordeal; they were satisfied, and the traitors should be executed. But Clary, still a prey to his exaltation, insisted, and a huge bonfire was made. An eye-witness, quoted in the "*Théâtre sacré des Cévennes*," describes what follows:—

"Clary wore a white smock, and he placed himself in the midst of the faggots, standing upright and having his hands raised above his head. He was still agitated, and spoke by inspiration. Some told me that he himself set the pile on fire by merely touching it—a miracle I observed often, especially when one cried, *A sac! à sac!* against the temples of Babylon. The wife of Clary and his father-in-law and sisters and his own relatives were there, his wife crying loudly. Clary did not leave the fire till the wood was completely consumed, and no more flames arose. The Spirit did not leave him all the while, for about a quarter of an hour. He spoke with convulsive movements of the breast and great sobs. M. Cavalier made prayer. I was one of the first to embrace Clary and examine his



clothing and hair, which the flames had respected, even to having left no trace on them. His wife and kinsfolk were in raptures, and all the assembly praised and glorified God for the miracle. I saw and heard these things."

This seems precise and conclusive, but Court, in his account, gives another colour to the story. He says :—

"This incident made a great noise in the province ; it was attested in its main features by a great many witnesses, but the information I obtained on the spot went to establish these three points :

"1. Clary did not remain in the midst of the fire.

"2. He dashed through it twice.

"3. He was so badly burnt in the neck and arms that he was forced to be taken to Pierredou to have his wounds attended to. The Brigadier Montbonnoux, an intimate friend of Clary, and one who lived with him long after this event, confirmed all these three points, but nevertheless considered that he would have been more seriously injured but for miraculous intervention."

The condition of wild excitement in which the Calvinists were rendered them incapable of calm observation, and led them involuntarily to pervert facts and imagine miracles. It is curious, moreover, that although the prophecies of the inspired were almost always belied by the event, the insurgents never lost their confidence in these oracles of God.

At this point it becomes necessary to devote a few words to Jean Cavalier, the ablest commander of the Camisards. He was born at Ribaut, near Anduze, was the son of a labourer, had been a swineherd and then a baker's boy. He was short and stoutly built, had a big head, broad shoulders, and the neck of a bull. His eyes



were blue, his hair long and fair. Sent as a boy to school, he was encouraged by his mother, a venomous Calvinist, to oppose and hate everything that savoured of Catholicism. Every evening, on his return from school, she sought to undo all the doctrinal teaching that had been given him there. His father, a Catholic, urged him to attend Mass ; the boy refused. The persecution to which the Huguenots were subjected led him to quit the land at the age of sixteen, and he went to Geneva, where he resumed his occupation as a baker. Meeting a Cevenol refugee in the streets of Geneva, he was told that his mother had been imprisoned at Aigues-Mortes, and his father, as suspected, at Carcassonne. He determined to return to the Cevennes, and he crossed the frontier in 1702. He found that his father and mother had been released, she on promising conformity. He at once dissuaded her from attending Mass, and he succeeded equally with his father.

A few days later occurred the murder of the arch-priest Du Chayla, at Pont-de-Montvert. Cavalier at once offered his hands to The Mower, and he speedily gathered about him a body of followers, and they secured arms by forcing the doors of the parsonage of S. Martin-de-Durfort, where was a collection of weapons, but no injury was done to the prior in charge there, who had taken no part in the persecution of the Calvinists.

The area of insurrection extended through six dioceses, those of Mende, Alais, Viviers, Uzès, Nîmes and Montpellier—in fact, over the present departments of Lozère, Ardèche, Gard and Hérault.

In January, 1703, the Marshal de Broglie, with a considerable force of dragoons and militia, went to

Vaunage in quest of Cavalier, but could not find him, for he, in fact, was then in Nîmes, disguised, purchasing powder. De Broglie was on his way back when some dragoons, who were reconnoitring, came to him to announce that a large body of Camisards was assembled, with drums beating and singing psalms, at two farms forming a hamlet called the Mas de Gaffard. He gave immediate orders to Captain Poul, who was in command, to dislodge them. De Broglie was in the centre, Poul on the right wing, and La Dourville, captain of dragoons, on the left. When the insurgents saw the royal troops approach they drew up, prepared for battle, in a situation naturally adapted for defence. The insurgents received the first volley without breaking formation; they replied by a musket discharge that disordered the left wing and centre of the enemy. The militia were seized with panic, and in turning to fly threw the dragoons into confusion. Poul alone rushed forwards brandishing his sword, when a boy threw a stone at him that brought him down from his saddle, and Catinat rushing forward despatched him. Then seeing the royal troops in rout the Camisards pursued, shouting "Voilà votre Poul (cock)! We have plucked his feathers; stay to eat him."

Immediately after this success the Camisards marched to Roquecourbe, near Nîmes, and on the way set fire to the church and village of Pouls and massacred several of the inhabitants. Thence they directed their attentions to Moussac, where was a garrison of militia commanded by M. de Saint-Chattes. They took the place, and the whole detachment was either slaughtered by them or were drowned in the endeavour to escape across the Gardon.

Cavalier now departed at the head of eight hundred men to rouse the Vivarais. The Count du Roure, at the head of the militia, attempted to stop him; a desperate conflict ensued in the night. The Baron de Largorce, wounded in the thigh, a very old man, fell from his horse. Du Roure was forced to retreat with only sixty men. Five hundred corpses of his men strewed the battlefield. Largorce was lying on the snow. He was clubbed to death by Cavalier's men.

But this victory was a preliminary to a disaster. Cavalier was drawn into an ambushade by S. Julien, the new commander of the troops; he lost two hundred of his men, was obliged to fly and hide himself, and make his way back to his comrades in the Cevennes as best he might.

As the contest went on, each side became more cruel. Forests were set on fire that were supposed to serve as hiding-places for the Camisards, villages were burnt that were known to harbour them.

On their side the insurgents did not spare even the Protestant nobles who hesitated about joining in the insurrection. In December, 1702, the Camisards burnt the church of S. Jean de Ceyrargues, and taking the curé they bound him hand and foot, and putting knives into the children's hands, bade them stab him to death, encouraging them with the words, "Dip your hands in the blood of the ungodly."

In January, 1703, Cavalier burnt the church and thirteen houses in S. Jean de Marvéjols, that belonged to Catholics, and massacred twenty of these latter, among them four women and a child of two years old.

In February, 1703, at Robiac, the insurgents murdered seven persons, among these a woman whom they dis-

membered alive because she refused to abjure her religion.

On the 17th of the same month, in the same year, the band under Joany entered Chamborigaud and committed atrocious acts. They tied three children up in sacks and threw them into a furnace. A mother flying with her five children was caught; her eldest son was stabbed with a bayonet and his tongue torn out, the youngest had his eyes scooped out, the third was dismembered; the mouth of the fourth was filled with burning coals, and the fifth was brained with clubs. The mother was then stabbed to death. The six victims were then put on a bed, along with other inhabitants of the place, in one heap, and the whole consumed by fire. Twenty-four victims perished. When Joany left, the Catholics retaliated by destroying the houses of the Protestants, so that only two houses remained standing, those of the Catholics having been burnt by Joany. The two last were burnt by the fanatics on August 27th, 1703, and three more Catholics killed. Next year seven houses that had been rebuilt or repaired were again set on fire and three Catholic families slaughtered.

At S. Génies de Malgoire, Cavalier took the place in April, 1704, and cut the whole garrison to pieces. He set fire to the church and the houses of the Catholics, and burnt in them seven of the inhabitants and the curé and vicaire.

At Ambais Sommière, on September 27th, 1703, the band of Cavalier roasted a girl of three years old over a slow fire.

The war was degenerating into fiendish reprisals on one side as well as the other. But the sad feature in this was that the victims in most cases were not those

who had been actively engaged in hostilities, but inoffensive peasants.

Thirty-one parishes in the Cevennes, by order of the governor, were destroyed, every house was required to be burnt, and three days only were accorded to the inhabitants to retire with their cattle and their substance.

It is unnecessary to relate all the engagements in which the Camisards were either victorious or defeated by the royal troops. Cavalier and Roland marked themselves out as the most able commanders, but Roland was defeated at Pompignan, with the loss of three hundred men. A month later, April, 1703, a body of the same number were surrounded in La Tour de Belot ; Cavalier, who was with them, escaped ; the rest perished by fire, the place catching from the hand grenades cast in.

The last and final victory gained by Cavalier was at Ste. Chatte at the end of 1704, against the royal troops commanded by La Jonquière, who was himself wounded. A whole regiment of six hundred soldiers and twenty-five officers was swept away by the Camisards.

Montrevel, the governor after Bâville, had shown equal incapacity and barbarity. He was now replaced by the Marshal Villars, who at once inaugurated a different system in dealing with the insurgents. He recognised that the cruelties committed had exasperated the evil. He announced that he was come to pacify spirits, not to outrage consciences ; all he desired was to bring those who were in revolt into allegiance to the King. He was ready to accept the submission of the Camisard leaders, to grant them commissions in the army, and to let the past be forgotten. Cavalier received a pension and

retired, first to Holland and then to England. The revolt lingered on, the most fanatical refusing all compromise ; but gradually opposition died away, prophecy ceased—prophecy that had always proved false and had led to terrible disaster. And very many years had not passed before dead indifference had settled down over a people that had gone mad with zeal.

When we come to look at what was the creed and what the moral code of these Cevenols, we are not surprised at this collapse of faith. They had but one article of belief—conviction that they themselves were the infallible oracles of the Holy Ghost. They had but one duty—to overthrow and root out whatever pertained to Catholic faith and worship. They recognised but one sin—attendance at Mass.

Their fanaticism was the natural and irresistible outcome of the cruel persecution to which they were subjected. Their prophetic trances, revelations, visions, ecstasies were due to nervous and cerebral exaltation caused by lack of wholesome nourishment. Had they been treated as was *la belle Isabeau* at the first, inspiration, as they considered it, would have ceased. Cavalier, with tears in his eyes, when well nourished on English beef and ale, lamented that the spirit of prophecy had left him.

And finally, what was gained to the Church of Rome by these forcible conversions and these butcheries? Ferdinand Fabre well says :—

“No land bears so deeply impressed on it the scars of battles fought for liberty of conscience as does our Cevenol country. Nowhere else in the world were fire and sword employed with more savagery to conquer the human being to God, and nowhere has it succeeded worse. It is the chastisement of all



criminal enterprises to lead to ends the reverse of those aimed at. Our mountaineers have remained what the Romans found them—energetic, sober, satirical. Certainly we have no end of processions; corporations and pious congregations abound. But it is a remarkable fact, that these gatherings of the faithful lack that gravity which a religious character should impress upon them. There is prayer, perhaps, but most assuredly there is diversion as well."

Cavalier in England was made a great deal of; he was fêted as a hero, received into the best society, and died Governor of Jersey in receipt of a handsome income; which he certainly did not deserve, as he had shown himself atrociously cruel, not to priests only, but to harmless peasant men and women, whose only crime consisted in adherence to the faith of their fathers.



## CHAPTER XII

### ALAIS

Descent from La Bastide—Viaduct of the Luech—Coal-beds—The town of Alais—Rochebelle—Ancient oppidum—Hermitage—The last hermit—Sidonius Apollinaris—The Citadel—Family quarrels—The Cambis family—A ghost story—Making polemical use of a ghost—Huguenots take Alais—Murders—The Bishopric—The Cathedral—Silk culture—Introduction of the mulberry and the worm to Europe—Silk husbandry in France—Favoured by Henry IV.—Olivier de Serre—Colbert—The Magnanerie—Silk-weaving introduced into England—A disaster that proved a blessing—Transformations of the caterpillar—Florian—The faults of an Englishman.

WHEN the train, after quitting La Bastide, has passed through a tunnel at the highest point of the pass, you rush out of a northern clime, with northern vegetation, into a climate with tree, shrub, and flower wholly southern. The Allier and its tributaries were making full gallop for the Atlantic; you see at once torrents racing down gorges to fling themselves into the Mediterranean in which no Greenland icebergs ever float to chill alike the currents and the air. Gulfs open beside the line clothed in chestnuts, mulberries, almonds, vines; oleanders appear, and the kermes oak with its varnished leaves covering the slopes.

The line does not descend the first valley entered, but bores its way through spur after spur of the mountain chain till it reaches the furrow through which flows the Gardon d'Alais. Génolhac is passed, that

suffered cruelly from Catholic and Camisard alike, whence Pont-de-Montvert may be visited, and the house seen where lived the Abbé du Chayla.

A magnificent curved viaduct crosses the basin of the Luech, carried on two stages of arcades 180 feet above the river to Chamborigaud, the tragic story of which has been told in the preceding chapter. The line traverses the masses of a rock and earth slide from the Montagne du Gouffre, and enters a region of coal-beds. The coal seams can be seen between sandstone in the cuttings for the line. On the right is the donjon of La Tour commanding the abbey of Cendras, burnt by the Camisards, then gorges and smoking cinder heaps, and we arrive at Alais, a neat, pleasant, cheerful town, once the seat of a bishop, situated in a loop formed by the Gardon, with the lofty rock of Rochebelle opposite on the further side of the river. This height was the site of the primitive oppidum of Alesia, or Alestia. The cyclopean walls remain in places fairly perfect, and the enclosure can be traced throughout. Alais never was a Roman city; it was, however, probably a place where the iron mines were worked. A hermitage was there till the Revolution. When the plague raged in Alais in 1721, a Carmelite, Esprit Boyer, worked indefatigably among the sick, and on its cessation obtained leave to retire to this hermitage, where he planted a garden and reared a chapel. On his death another hermit took his place, and he assumed the honoured name of Esprit, but as he was a drunkard he was nicknamed Esprit de Vin. He ran away, carrying with him the chapel bell, but was caught and ordered to return to his hermitage. In 1793 he was denounced as suspect, and some individuals were sent up the

height to arrest him. He refused to open to them, and threw stones at their heads and threatened to shoot the first man who entered. They, however, stove in the door with a pole, whereupon Esprit escaped out of a window, but in trying to crawl away unseen fell over the rocks and broke his leg. He was taken to the hospital and died there.

In the year 472 that magnificent prelate, Sidonius Apollinaris, Bishop of Clermont, and a great noble to boot, came to Alais to pay a visit to Tonantius Ferreolus, Prefect of Gaul, who had his villa at Prusianus, now Brégis, a little to the south-west of Alais. Another friend, a Roman senator, had his country house on the opposite or Alesian side of the river. Sidonius says: "The Vardo (Gardon) separates the two domains. These splendid dwellings were commanded by hills covered with vines and olives; before one of them stretched a rich and vast plain, the other looked out on woods. Every morning there was a strife between our two hosts, very flattering to myself, as to which should have our society for the day, which should make his kitchen smoke on our behalf. With them we flew from pleasure to pleasure. Hardly had we set foot in the vestibule of one or the other, before there appeared bands of those who played tennis, and above their noisy shouts we could hear the braying of cornets. . . . Whilst any one of us was occupied in reading or in playing, the butler would come to inform us that it was time for us to take our places at table. We dined promptly, after the manner of senators."

Where stands now the citadel of Alais stood formerly two castles frowning at one another side by side. The lordship of Alais was in the family of De Pelet, but the

last of the name died in 1405, leaving two daughters and the barony to be divided between them. Naturally they quarrelled. Each would have the rock and a castle on the summit, and as neither could be induced to yield a right, they had their two castles and scolded and swore at one another out of the windows. At last the situation became so intolerable that first one and then the other sold their half baronies to a De Cambis, and he ran the two castles into one.

Jacques de Cambis, lord of Alais, was engaged in Catalonia under the great Condé. His war-cry was "Allez comme Alès!" and on his son's sword was inscribed :

"Je suis Cambis pour ma foi,  
Ma maitresse et mon roi,  
Si tu m'attends, confesse toi!"

Both Jacques and his son died on the same day, August 21st, 1653, of wounds received at the taking of Tortosa. With them died out the male branch of the barons of Alais.

On November 15th, 1323, died a citizen of Alais, named Guy de Corbian. A week after his burial his widow came in great agitation to the Dominican convent to say that her husband walked and made unpleasant noises in the house, and she begged that the prior would lay his spirit. Jean Gobi was prior at the time. He took three brethren with him and went to the house. As soon as darkness settled in, all at once the widow screamed out, "There he is! There is my husband!" All present were dreadfully frightened, but the prior recovered first, and bade the woman question the ghost. She asked, "Are you a good or a bad spirit?" *Answer*: "Good."—"Where are you now?"

*Ans.*: "In purgatory."—"Why do you trouble the house?" *Ans.*: "A sin was committed in it by my mother."—"What did she commit?" *Ans.*: "That is a delicate question, which I decline to answer."—"Can you make the sign of the cross?" *Ans.*: "Do not ask silly questions. How can I when I have no hands?"—"How then is it that you can hear, having no ears?" was the shrewd repartee. The ghost hesitated a moment and then replied, "By a special privilege of God." Now it so happened that at this very period a furious controversy was going on between the Dominicans and the Franciscans as to whether the disembodied spirits of the just had the sight of the Face of God. The Franciscans said they had not, the Dominicans asserted that they had. The strife became so hot and acrimonious that Pope John XXII. on November 12th, 1323, issued a decision condemning the opinion of the Friars Minor. They refused to surrender their tenet. The General of the Order appealed from an ill-informed Pope to a General Council. Such an appeal is absurd, argued their adversaries. A council derives all its authority from the Pope. Philip of Valois threatened that unless John withdrew his judgment he would have him burned as a heretic. But he had not the power to carry his threat into execution. Now this ghost story occurred a week or fortnight after John XXII. had issued his homily, in which he asserted that the dead did enjoy the beatific vision. Jean Gobi saw his opportunity. He published at once an account of his interview with a good spirit, and related how that he had catechised the ghost on the very point under dispute, and that the departed Guy de Corbian had affirmed precisely the doctrine for which the Dominicans con-



tended, and which the Pope had ratified. What better evidence could be desired :

The Franciscans might have replied that they had no better evidence than the word of Gobi, and that they doubted his veracity. But they said nothing, they saw that every sensible man would judge that Jean Gobi told fibs.

“The tenet,” says Milman, “had become a passion with the Pope ; benefices and preferments were showered on those who inclined to his opinions—the rest were regarded with coldness and neglect.”

Jean Gobi doubtless had hopes of reaping some solid advantages by his opportune revelation. But he was disappointed. John XXII. died, and his successor, Benedict XII., published his judgment on the question, determining that the holy dead did not immediately behold the Godhead, thus at least implying the heresy of his predecessor.

In 1567 the Huguenots occupied Alais, and massacred six of the canons in the church whilst they were singing Matins, as also two cordeliers and several other ecclesiastics. But Alais was retaken. In 1575 they again surrounded Alais, under their captains Guidau and Broise, the latter of whom managed to escalate the walls by means of a vine-trellis. One part of the population was massacred ; those who could fled into the castle. Damville came to the aid of the besiegers, and on Easter Eve, after nine weeks of gallant defence, the castle surrendered. The see of Alais was constituted in 1694. The cathedral was consecrated in 1780, and is a heavy and hideous building. Only the west tower remains of the

old church. At the Revolution it was turned into a place for clubs to assemble; but as the church was inconveniently large for the purpose, it was decided to pull it down. No one in Alais, however, could be found to set his hand to its destruction.

The last bishop, De Bausset, escaped into Switzerland at the time of the outbreak; but unable to endure exile from France he incautiously returned, was arrested, and thrown into prison. It was only due to his having been forgotten that he escaped the guillotine. In 1801, by order of Pius VII., he resigned the see to facilitate the reorganisation of the dioceses under the Concordat, and he died in Paris in 1824. The great esplanade above the Gardon before the Place de la République, planted with plane trees, commands an extensive view over the plain green with mulberries and chestnut, and with here and there the silver-grey of the olive rising from among the darker leaves like a puff of smoke.

Alais is one of the principal centres of silkworm culture in Languedoc, and it has raised a statue to Pasteur, representing him holding a twig of mulberry in his hand, in gratitude for his discovery of the fibrine, the malady which threatened the industry, and for indicating the means of arresting the plague.

Neither the white mulberry nor the bombyx—the silkworm that feeds on its leaves—is a native of Europe. Both come from China. The history of the origin of the silkworm culture and the introduction of both the mulberry and the worm into Europe is sufficiently curious, and may be summed up in a few lines.

The Chinese assert that the discovery of the use of silk and how to weave it took place in the year

B.C. 2,697, and great secrecy was observed as to how the silkworm was reared and how the cocoon was unwound; and Chinese laws forbade under penalty of death the divulgence of the secret and the exportation beyond the limits of the Celestial Empire of the seed of the mulberry and the eggs of the worm.

However, about three thousand years later, in the year A.D. 400, a Chinese princess married the King of Khotan on the borders of Turkestan, and she, at the peril of her life, carried off some of the grains of mulberry and the eggs of the caterpillar, and by this means introduced the culture of silk into the domains of the king. Some years later, in 462, Japan got possession of the means of sericulture by a similar method.

From Khotan the industry slowly spread to Persia and India.

A century and a half later, about 550, two monks of Mount Athos, but of Persian origin, went to preach Christianity in the unknown regions beyond the Caspian Sea. These courageous apostles penetrated to Khotan, and there discovered whence came the silk stuffs that found their way into Europe in small quantities, and which were so costly that they sold for their weight in gold.

Rejoiced at their discovery, the monks schemed how they might make Greece benefit by it. This, however, was not easy, as the inhabitants of Khotan, knowing the value of their industry, had, like the Chinese, forbidden the exportation of the seeds of the mulberry and the eggs of the silkworm. The monks employed craft. In all caution and secrecy they collected mulberries, crushed them in water, and obtaining thus the seed alone, dried it and enclosed it in their hollow

bamboo canes. Then they departed on their return journey. On reaching Greece they related their adventures and sowed the seed.

The young plants did not fail to spring up, and thus was Greece supplied with the precious tree that is to-day spread along all the coast of the Mediterranean.

But they had not done enough. Only half of their self-imposed task was accomplished. The Emperor Justinian sent for the monks, listened to their narrative, gave them money, and urged them to return into the East and obtain a supply of the bombyx grain. Nothing loath they started, arrived in Khotan, and in much the same manner as before secreted and brought to Europe in all haste the eggs that would hatch out in spring. The date of their return was 553.

Meanwhile the young mulberries had grown vigorously, and when the worms issued from their shells they found abundant nourishment. They passed through their several stages of development and gave vigorous descendants.

European sericulture was created, but was slow in making progress. However, in Greece the diffusion was so rapid that in a short time what had been called the Peloponnesus changed its name to Morea, the land of the mulberry. From the borders of the Ægean the culture spread to Sicily, to Italy, and to Spain. The Arabs, who had already in the East acquired a knowledge of how to produce silk, spread the industry through all the countries that they conquered.

France was slow in acquiring it. The raw silk was indeed imported to Lyons and Tours in the latter part of the fifteenth century, but it was not till after the campaign in Naples of 1495 that the gentlemen who

had attended Charles VIII. brought back with them the seed of the white mulberry and the eggs of the silkworm into Languedoc and Provence. The first mulberries planted there were at Alban, near Montélimar, by Guy Pape, Sieur de Saint-Alban.

The first steps taken in this new culture were slow and timid during nearly a century. Francis I. accorded special favours. His successor, Henry II., is said to have been the first King of France to wear silk stockings, 1550. The religious troubles and the rivalries between the great seigneurs did much to impede the progress of agriculture and of sericulture. The cultivators of the soil were crushed by taxation and exactions of every sort, as well as by the ravages of rival political and religious factions.

But when Henry IV. was well settled on his throne, and the League was at an end, it was possible for agriculture and all the trades save that of the armourer to revive. Henry was keenly desirous to raise them from the deplorable condition into which they had been plunged during the long period of civil and religious discord which had marked the end of the dynasty of the Valois.

The Béarnais, who had spent his early years among farmers, nourished great ideas as to how to help them on and to make trade flourish in the land, so great as sometimes to startle his most devoted councillors, notably Sully, his finance minister. The King, seeing that the industry of weaving silks was on the increase, and that to supply the looms raw material had to be imported in great quantities, was desirous of encouraging the production of silk in France, and he confided to a gentleman of the Vivarais, Olivier de

Serres, the mission of developing sericulture by writing a treatise advocating it. De Serres published his "La cueillette de la soie" in 1599. Two years later he brought to Paris twenty thousand young mulberry trees, which were planted in the gardens of the Tuileries. At the same time Traucat, a gardener at Nîmes, with royal assistance, erected vast nurseries, which in forty years supplied over five millions of mulberry stocks. Sully, who had at first thought the King's projects chimerical, threw himself eagerly into them when he saw that they were likely to increase the wealth of the country; prizes were offered, subventions were promised to such as should take active part in the development of the industry. There exist still some of the old mulberry trees planted four centuries ago, that the Cevenol peasants designated Sullys in commemoration of the great minister of Henry.

Sericulture made no progress during the reign of Louis XIII. It lost ground, and it was Colbert, the celebrated minister of Louis XIV., who resumed forty years later the policy of Henry IV., and had to struggle against just the same difficulties of inertia and indifference among nobles and peasants alike. Colbert, following the same idea as his predecessors, wished that France should produce the raw material needed for the looms of Lyons, which were using 500,000 kilogrammes of foreign silk, whereas the French harvest produced at the outside 20,000 kilos of raw silk.

To attain this result, exemptions from taxation were accorded to plantations of mulberry trees and to magnaneries of silk. In the Langue d'Oc, the silkworm is called *magnan*, derived from the Latin *magnus*, as giving the greatest profit to the farmer, and the sheds in which



the worm is brought to spin is called a magnanerie. A bonus of twenty-four sols, equal to five francs, was given for every mulberry plant that lived over three years. The Protestants of the south devoted themselves especially and with great energy to the rearing of silk-worms. In 1650 De Comprieu, Consul of Le Vigan, introduced the new industry into the Cevennes from the Vivarais where it had taken root, due to the initiation of Olivier de Serres.

A few years later Colbert brought a silk-spinner, Pierre Benay, from Bologna and installed him near Aubenas, in a factory for the spinning of the thread.

The production of the cocoon and of silk was prospering and developing, when in 1605 the Edict of Nantes was revoked, and this disastrously affected the growing industry. The Protestants, hunted out and persecuted, were forced to expatriate themselves, and carry their knowledge and their energies elsewhere. The creation of silk-weaving factories in Switzerland, Germany, and England was mainly due to these refugees. Some 50,000 French Protestants had come to England. Of these the silk-spinners settled in Spitalfields, and introduced several new branches of their art. At this time foreign silks were freely imported, and about 700,000 pounds' worth were annually admitted. But the establishment of the refugees in this country led to monopolies and restrictions. In 1692 they obtained a patent, giving them the exclusive right to manufacture lute-strings and à-la-modes, the two fashionable silks of the day, and in 1697 their solicitations were effectual in obtaining from Parliament a prohibition, not only of the importation of all European manufactured goods, but also

of those of India and China. From this period the smuggling of silks from France became extensive, reaching, it is said, to the value of £500,000 per annum.

In France a disaster at the beginning of the eighteenth century gave a new impulse to sericulture in the south. The winter of 1709 was of exceptional severity, and froze the olive trees of Languedoc and Provence. The farmers, obliged to root out their stricken olives, replaced them by mulberries, and the rearing of silkworms, the spinning and weaving of the silk made rapid progress. From this time sericulture issued from a period of groping and hesitation to become a standard industry. The production of cocoons rose to six and seven millions of kilogrammes between 1760 and 1790, again to slacken during the period of revolution. Nor were the first years of the nineteenth century, marked as they were by the great wars of the Empire, favourable to the industry. But an event that had considerable influence on the destinies of agricultural France had taken place. The lands of the clergy and of the emigrated nobility had been declared national property, and had been sold at ridiculously low prices to the peasants on account of the depreciation of the paper money of the period, the assignats. The peasants worked with enthusiasm and energy on the land as proprietors where they had lived painfully as common labourers. Great plantations were made on ground newly cleared, and so soon as peace gave the people breathing time, the production of France doubled as by enchantment. From 500,000 kilogrammes, the output of silk passed to a million, between 1826 and 1830, and between 1840 and 1854 it grew to two millions.

"The silkworm is the caterpillar of the mulberry-tree moth (*Bombyx mori*) belonging to the tribe of mealy-winged nocturnal insects, of which in the summer evenings we see so many examples. The eggs of this moth are smaller than grains of mustard-seed, very numerous, slightly flattened, yellowish at first, but changing in a few days to a slate colour. In temperate climates they can be preserved through the winter without hatching until the time when the mulberry tree puts forth its leaves in the following spring. This tree forms the entire food of the caterpillar, and seems almost exclusively its own; for while other trees and vegetables nourish myriads of insects, the mulberry tree is seldom attacked by any but this insect, which in many parts of its native country, China, inhabits the leaves in the open air, and goes through all its changes without any attention from man. The common mulberry (*Morus nigra*), so well known in Great Britain, is not the best species for the nourishment of the silkworm. The white-fruited mulberry (*M. alba*), a native of China, is the best, and is greatly preferred by the insect."<sup>1</sup>

The silkworm when first hatched is about a quarter of an inch long. After eight days' feeding, it prepares to change its skin. It throws out filaments of silk, attaching its skin to adjacent objects, becomes sluggish, raises the forepart of its body, and finally the whole outer case is cast off, including the feet and jaws. The newly moulted worm is pale in colour, but speedily regains its appetite, which had failed previous to the change, and it swells so fast that in five days another uncasing becomes necessary. Four of these moults and renewals of the skin bring the caterpillar to its full size, when its appetite becomes voracious, and the succulent parts of the mulberry leaf disappear with

<sup>1</sup> Tomlinson's *Cyclopædia of the Useful Arts*, *sub voce*.

extraordinary rapidity. The insect is now nearly three inches long. Beneath the jaw are two small orifices through which the worm draws the silken lines out of its body.

Having acquired full size in the course of twenty-five to thirty days, and ceasing to eat during the remainder of its life, it begins to discharge a viscid secretion in the form of pulpy twin lines that rapidly harden in the air. It begins now to climb and seek out a suitable place for spinning the cocoon. For this purpose broom and heath-bushes are erected about the trays in which they have hitherto lived and fed and sloughed their skins. The insect first forms a loose structure of floss-silk, and then within it the closer texture of its nest, of an ovoid shape; within this the caterpillar remains working out of sight, spinning its own beautiful winding-sheet, the production of which reduces its size to one-half. On the completion of the cocoon it changes its skin once more and becomes a chrysalis. In this corpse-like state it remains for a fortnight or three weeks. Then it bursts its cerements and comes forth furnished with wings, antennæ and feet for living in its new element—the atmosphere. The female moth flutters its wings, but rarely uses them for flight, but the male employs his for seeking a partner. As the moth is not furnished with teeth, it perforates its tomb by knocking with its head against the end of the cocoon, after moistening it with saliva, and thus rendering the filaments more easily torn asunder by its claws. In the perfect or *imago* form the insect takes no food, and lives only two or three days; the female dies after laying her eggs, and the male does not long survive her.

The cocoons destined for filature are not suffered to remain many days with the worms alive within them. Those containing male moths are distinguished as being lighter than those that hold the female. Only so many of each are retained as are required for the propagation of the worm. The rest are plunged in boiling water or put into an oven to extinguish the life in the chrysalis. The reeling off of the silk is the next process.

The cocoons are softened by immersion in warm water, and then the reeler stirs them with brushes, to which the loose threads adhere, and are thus drawn out of the water. They are taken up four or five together and twisted by the fingers into one thread, passed through a metal loop, and reeled off. The silk husbandry is completed within six weeks from the end of April.<sup>1</sup>

The life of the insect from leaving the egg has been about fifty days, and in that period what a series of changes—transformations even—it has gone through; and all for what, but the produce of one of the most beautiful imaginable textures for the adornment of womankind! Verily Nature has made laborious provision that she should be coquette.

Even the severe Quakeress, objecting on principle to all adornment, must don a pearl-grey silk bonnet.

On the Place de la République is a bronze statue to Florian (Jean Pierre Claris), born in the château of Florian, near Sauve, in 1755, and who died in 1794. He wrote plays, stories, verses, and fables. Not know-

<sup>1</sup> De l'Arbousset, *Les Cévennes Séricoles*, and *Cours de Sériculture Pratique*, Alais, n.d. Maillot (E.), *Leçons sur le Ver à Soie*, Paris, 1885.

ing much about his works, I went to a bookseller at Alais to ask if he had them.

"The works of Florian!" he exclaimed. "We have his statue in the place."

"Yes; but that is the work of the sculptor Gaudez, not of Florian himself."

"Les œuvres de Florian—mais—" The man looked puzzled. "He lived a very long time ago. What did he write?"

"I fancy, fables."

"Ah, monsieur! you mistake. That was La Fontaine."

"There is an 'F' in each," said I, "as there is a river in Macedon, and there is also a river in Monmouth, and there is salmon in both." Of course, the allusion was lost on him.

"I think his works have never been reprinted," said the bookseller. "I will tell my child to ask the school-master about him."

Now I happen to possess at home an edition of Florian, printed in the year III. of the Republic, 1797, and on my return I read some of his works—as much as was possible. Among them is an "English novel," very complimentary to our nation at the opening, but full of the most amusing blunders. The characters are Sir Edouerd Selmours, Mistriss Hartlay, a M. Pikle, and a Mekelfort. Florian gives a translation into French verse of "Auld Robin Gray," but in an evil moment appended the original Scottish text, which is rendered thus—

"Vhen the shepare in the fauld, and the kyeat hame  
And all the weary warld asleop is gane,  
Thewaes o my heart fall in shovers fra my eye"—

and so on.



We have a fault, Florian is kind enough to inform us :—

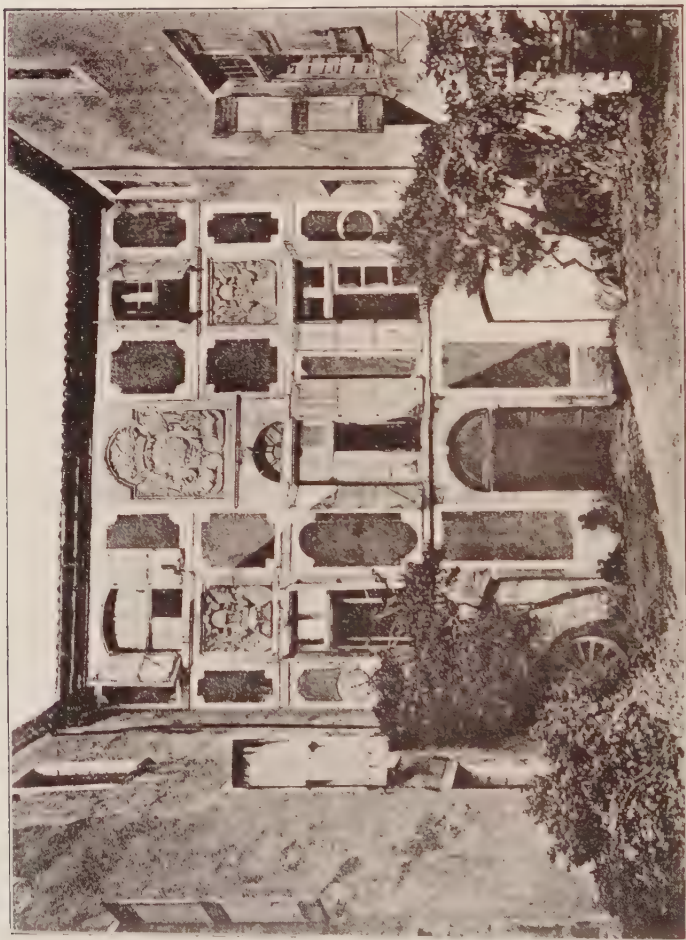
“Ils dédaignent d'ouvrir les yeux sur le mérite, sur les qualités qui sont propres à chaque peuple ; cette insouciance donne à leurs vertus un air d'orgueil qui en diminue l'attrait ; enfin, ils comptent pour fort peu de chose l'approbation, le suffrage des autres ; et le seul moyen d'être aimable, c'est de les compter pour beaucoup.”

I suspect that this criticism is more just than his rendering of English surnames and his spelling of Scottish words.





WOMEN'S  
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CASTLE COURT, GANGES

## CHAPTER XIII

### GANGES

Quissac—A tree gallows—The micocoulier—Sauve—Massacre by the Camisards—The abbot's summer-house—Manufacture of essences on the *garigue*—S. Hippolyte-du-Fort—Cruelties of Roland—Ganges—The murder of the marchioness—Grotto des Demoiselles—Manufactures of Ganges—Season for excursions.

FROM Alais the train that runs on to Nîmes drops one at Quissac, whence diverges a branch to Le Vigan and Tournemire on the main line from Paris to Bézier, Narbonne, and Barcelona. Quissac lies on the Vidourle, that flows a thin stream in a vast bed of pebbles, on which the washerwomen spread their linen. The esplanade by the river is planted, and on it is the Protestant *temple*, a feeble imitation of the Maison Carée at Nîmes. The parish church is in another part of the town, and is an astounding bit of patchwork after wreckage by the Camisards. The west front is an architectural curiosity. In the little *place* in front of it is a plane tree, serving, I presume, as a gallows for all the vermin caught in the place and neighbourhood. When I was there, rats, mice, weasels depended from the branches, and a sulky doll that would not eat had been hoisted up as well, and was dangling by its neck, whilst the little executioner stood below haranguing it.

The micocoulier, or nettle tree (*Celtis Australis*), is much grown around Quissac. This tree flourishes along the south of Europe bordering on the Mediterranean, in Italy, Greece, on the coast of Asia Minor, and stretches to the south of the Caspian. The tree is at home also in Algeria and Tunis. It is grown here for making whip-handles and for pitchforks. For the latter purpose it is suffered to have but two or three shoots at the top, and pains are taken to give the stem the utmost regularity, as that is to serve as the handle to the fork. Of the wood is also made the yokes for the oxen. The wood is heated in an oven, and given the desired bend or shape when hot.

Sauve bears for its arms argent a mountain, on top of which grows a plant of sage (*sauve*), and in chief the words *Sal-Sal*, that stand for *Salvia Salvatrix*. Originally the town occupied the height where is now the ruined castle, but the inhabitants drifted down to the abbey, which was below. In the religious wars, Sauve was taken by the Huguenots, and remained a stronghold of the Calvinists till 1629. In the war of the Camisards the Protestants of the upper town offered to open the gates to them disguised in the uniform of the royal soldiery, but the plot was detected, and in resentment the Camisards set fire to the abbey church and monastic buildings, murdered the old prior, aged ninety-one, and the curé, aged seventy. They swept together forty of the parish priests of the neighbourhood and mutilated them in the most horrible manner.

The country-house of the abbots of the fourteenth century has the inscription on it: "In urbe omnibus, in deserto mihi." (In the town I am at everybody's beck and call, in the desert I belong to myself only.)

And "desert" is not at all an inappropriate term for the country between Sauve and S. Hippolyte. It is a land of disintegrated rock, white as chalk, and assuming strange forms, fissured in parts vertically, in others horizontally, the wide desert growing nothing but aromatic herbs, as sage and juniper. The Vidourle sinks and flows underground. The ruins of a castle stand above the dry bed at a curve in the channel.

But even this desolate *garigue* has its use, as have those further south. It grows lavender, rosemary, thyme in abundance, savin, sage, savory; and the peasants collect these herbs and distil essences from them. To the fragrant essences is added bitter rue. The distillation takes place on the *garigue* by means of movable retorts that travel about from one place to another. Vast quantities of herbs are required for the purpose. Thus, to obtain one kilogramme of essence of thyme, it requires 400 kilogrammes of leaves, except in May, when the plant is in greatest vigour and most redolent, then only half that amount is required.

The great centre of the industry is Sommières to the south of Quissac, where the *garigues* are more extensive than near Sauve.

A great rivalry exists between the manufacturers of scents in this part of Languedoc and those of Provence. All have been hit alike of late years by the fabrication of scents out of coal tar, that seems as ready to produce sweet odours as it is to yield bright dyes.

These deserts of limestone apparently grow nothing but what is fragrant. Their vegetation expires in sweet odours.

At S. Hippolyte-du-Fort the mountains draw near, terraced up for olives. The town with its three churches,



commanded by a castle with its walls and towers, is eminently picturesque. The town was moved from its ancient site, S. Hippolyte le Vieux, about a castle built on a rock, Roquefourcade, so called from its form. The old parish church was there to the Revolution when it was sold. The bulk of the population of S. Hippolyte adopted the Reform of Calvin, and Catholic worship was not restored till 1601, and then only intermittently. In 1774 the bishop found that there were only two or three Catholic families in it. All the rest were Huguenot "au dernier point," although the Protestant temple had been pulled down at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. A garrison was placed in the castle. It was attacked by the Camisards in vain. Roland entered the faubourgs on January 14th, 1704, burnt a church, and slaughtered three girls and five men.

Ganges lies in a valley at the junction of the Sumène with the Hérault, and near where the Vis emerges from its gorge to shed its waters into the Hérault. It is a bright town, with good inns, and is an admirable centre for several interesting excursions. The station is at a height at some distance from the town, and near it is a huge modern convent, very conspicuous, planted on a rock.

The town contains little of interest except the château of the Marquesses of Ganges, which unhappily is doomed to destruction, as it has been purchased by the town to be pulled down and the site to be occupied by a market-hall. This is the more to be regretted, as it is not only a very fine Renaissance structure, but is also rendered famous by the murder of the Marchioness in 1667. The story has been often told,

but must not here be omitted on that account. All versions rest on that of Pitaval, taken from the records of the Parliament of Toulouse. Pitaval's narrative was published in 1734. Unhappily he has decked it out with romantic features, drawn from conjecture, to explain the motive of the murderers, and we shall be obliged to distinguish between these and the facts that were proved.

At the Court of Louis XIV. one of the great beauties was the Marquise de Castellane, a woman as good as she was beautiful. Queen Christian of Sweden, who was then at the Court, declared that she had never seen one who was more lovely, and the painter, Mignard, took her portrait.

She was the daughter of a M. de Roussan, of Avignon, and after the death of her father had been educated in the house of her grandfather, M. de Nochères, who loved her as the apple of his eye. He was a very wealthy man, and she would be his heiress. At the age of thirteen she married the Marquess, who brought her to Paris. When aged twenty she was a widow, as her husband was drowned in the Mediterranean. She then returned to Avignon, and was at once surrounded by suitors. Her choice fell on the Marquess de Ganges, younger than herself, a man of a weak character, but with pleasant manners. The marriage took place in 1658. By him she became the mother of two children, a son and a daughter.

After a while the affection of the Marquess for his wife died away. Her superiority in mind and character offended his self-esteem, and to add to this his brother, the Abbé de Ganges, did his utmost to estrange the married couple.

The Marquess had three younger brothers. The elder, the Count de Ganges, does not enter into the story except towards its close. The second brother was the Abbé. This man was clever, cultured, of insinuating manners. He was not really in Holy Orders, but was one of those who at the period assumed a semi-ecclesiastical dress, and was given a benefice *in commendam*, the duties of which he never performed as unqualified, but the income of which he devoured. The third brother, the Chevalier, was a poor, weak creature, completely in the hands of the Abbé. The Marquess was much from home. He lived on bad terms with his wife; he found life dull in a little country town, and he liked the dissipation of a capital. He left his two younger brothers at the château, and placed the management of his estates in the hands of the Abbé.

According to Pitaval, both brothers fell in love with the far older Marquise, and the Abbé ventured to declare his sentiments towards her, and was repulsed with disdain so cutting as to fill him with resentment. Soon after M. de Nochères died, and left his vast fortune to his granddaughter in such a manner that her husband could not touch a penny of it without her consent. The Marquise at once had her will drawn up, bequeathing all her fortune to her mother, Mme. de Roussan, in trust for her children, but with the singular proviso that this old lady was to leave it entire to either one or other of her grandchildren, whichever she chose. When she deposited this will with the town councillor of Avignon, she added a codicil to the effect that in the event of her death and a later will being found this later will was to be regarded as invalid, as wrung from her against her intent, and that the

above will was alone to take effect. This provision was witnessed by several persons of authority, and she insisted further that it should be kept secret and in no way divulged.

On her return to Ganges she was cheerful, saw a good deal of company, and seemed to be without suspicion of evil devised against her. What made her the more easy was that her stepmother was there, and in her presence the Abbé and the Chevalier were circum-spect.

But before long the dowager marquise left for Montpellier, and her husband also departed. Since she had become an heiress he had feigned greater affection for her, and had treated her with courtesy. After his departure the Abbé had conferences with her. He assured her that the Marquess was deeply attached to her, but was wounded to the quick by her having made a will that passed him over ; that the only possible way of concord being completely re-established was for her to alter the terms of her will.

The Marquise was a woman. She allowed herself to be persuaded, and under the dictation of the Abbé drew up a second will, whereby she constituted her husband sole heir. But she did not revoke the other, the former will deposited at Avignon, and the Abbé, knowing nothing of her final declaration made there to vitiate any second disposition of her property, was satisfied.

It is wholly unnecessary to accept the romance of the passion of the Abbé for his sister-in-law imported into the story by Pitaval, and for which no evidence was produced later. She was then aged twenty-nine, older than the two elder brothers. The fact of the will

having been extorted from her, and the prospect of being able to share in the spoils should she die, is sufficient to account for what follows. The object of the Abbé now was to get rid of the Marquise.

She was not feeling well, and on the morning of May 17th, 1667, sent for the doctor, and asked for a draught. But when this was brought to her it looked dark and muddy, and she refused to drink it. It was not proved that this was poisoned, but it is not improbable that it was so. The Abbé and the Chevalier all day seemed restless, and were continually inquiring as to her condition, and seemed little pleased to learn that she was recovering from her indisposition.

The Marquise spent the day in bed. Several ladies of the town visited her, and she invited them to remain for dinner. She appeared in very good spirits; but it was noted that both her brothers-in-law spoke little and seemed distracted in mind. She joked the Chevalier about this, and he and the Abbé roused and attempted to talk, but manifestly with an effort. Nor would either of them eat. Presently the party broke up. The Abbé undertook the duties of host, and accompanied the ladies to the door of the château. The Chevalier remained behind with his sister-in-law. His manner was peculiar, he remained buried in thought. She asked him the reason, but could get no answer from him; then the door opened, the Abbé entered, and the solution to the puzzle was given.

So far we have the facts from the evidence of the witnesses before the Parliament of Toulouse; what follows is from the narrative of the Marchioness herself.

The Abbé entered the bedroom, a pistol in one hand and a tumbler with some dark turbid liquid in the other.



His features had changed expression. Rage flared from his eyes. He locked the door behind him, took his station before his sister-in-law, and signed to his brother, who drew his sword. At first it seemed to her that hesitation appeared in his face and movements, but if that were so, it passed rapidly away. The Abbé broke the silence. He stepped up to the bed and said : "Madame, you must die. Choose steel, lead, or poison."

She cried out, asking what she had done. She implored the two men to spare her. She promised to forget their conduct if they would withdraw. She turned to the Chevalier. She reminded him that she had frequently furnished him with money, and had recently given him a bill for several hundred livres. But in vain. He also spoke. "Enough, enough, Madame. Make your selection, or we shall choose for you."

The miserable woman took the glass out of the hand of the Abbé. She drank whilst he held the pistol to her breast, and the Chevalier menaced her heart with his rapier. Some drops falling on her bosom blistered it, and her lips were also blistered. The draught was a composition of arsenic and sublimate of mercury dissolved in aquafortis. The Chevalier noticed that she had not swallowed the dregs. He took a silver hairpin and swept all that remained attached to the side of the tumbler together into the bottom, and saying, "Be quick about it ; drain to the last drop," forced her to take it. She received it into her mouth but did not swallow what she had taken, but sank back into the bed, and in convulsive movements turned away and covering her head with the bedclothes spat out what she had last taken. Then she exclaimed, "For God's sake do not slay my



soul as well as my body ; send for a confessor." Both brothers left the room. They had no reason for refusing this last request, for the vicar was Perette, a bad man who had been tutor to the Marquess, and was in the confidence of the brothers.

No sooner was the door shut than the Marchioness sprang out of bed. In haste she drew on her petticoat, and opened the window that looked into the yard. The window was twenty-four feet from the ground, nevertheless she leaped down. At the same moment the door had opened and Perette entered ; he sprang after her, and succeeded in laying hold of her dress and retaining her for a moment or two. But the garment rent, and she fell to the ground on her feet without serious injury.

The vicar laid hold of a silver water-jar and hurled it after her, but missed his aim. The jug, instead of braining her, struck a stone and broke.

The Marquise found every door of the courtyard fastened and locked. In fear of the operation of the poison she thrust one of her tresses down her throat, and this produced sickness. Fortunately she had partaken of a good deal of pudding at the meal, and this in a measure prevented the immediate working of the poison. She tried to escape through the stable, but that was locked. A groom, however, came up. "Save me! Save me! I must escape!" she cried. The man, overcome with terror and pity, hesitated a moment, then caught her up in his arms, carried her through the stables, and handed her over to the first woman he encountered in the street.

The Marquise continued her flight. Already the brothers-in-law were in pursuit, shouting, "Hold her

fast! She is mad!" And whoever saw the Marquise running in her nightshirt, with a torn skirt and with bare feet over the pavement of the street, might well believe what they called out.

The people were already assembling and preparing to stop her, when the Chevalier caught her at the door of a Mme. de Prets, thrust her in, and entering himself bolted the house door. The Abbé coming up, pistol in hand, stood on the threshold and threatened to shoot any one who interfered. His sister-in-law in her madness was not to be made a spectacle of to every one.

In the house of Mme. de Prets a party of ladies was assembled. The Marquise rushed into the midst of them, followed by the Chevalier, crying out that she had been poisoned. The Chevalier declared before the ladies that his sister was insane, and they did not know at first what to make of this extraordinary scene. Mme. Brunette, the wife of the Calvinist preacher in the place, gave her some treacle, at the time supposed to be a sovereign remedy against poison. She swallowed it, but the fire of the poison made the Marchioness entreat for water. A tumbler was handed to her, but the Chevalier smashed it in her mouth as she was drinking. He succeeded in persuading the ladies that his unfortunate sister-in-law was out of her mind, and begged them to excuse such an unseemly irruption into their midst.

Then the poor creature implored to be allowed to go into the adjoining room; this was granted, but the Chevalier followed her, and with his rapier stabbed her twice in the breast. She cried out, ran to the door and entreated help. He followed, and, blind with rage, stabbed her five times in the back. The last time the weapon broke and left the blade sticking in her

shoulder. She fell at the feet of the assembled ladies drenched in blood. The Chevalier then ran downstairs, and cried to his brother, "Away! away! the job is done!" But as they hurried down the street they heard the women at the window crying for help and for a surgeon. The Abbé, in the idea that the Marquise was still living, had the incredible audacity to go back, enter the house, thrust the women aside, and put the pistol to the breast of his victim. Mme. Brunette struck up his hand, and the pistol did not go off. Thereupon the Abbé hit Mme. Brunette on the head, and again attempted to kill his sister-in-law, this time by braining her with the butt-end. Now, however, all the women present fell on him, dragged, beat, thrust, and succeeded eventually in expelling him from the house.

It was nine o'clock at night when the murderous attempt was made. Darkness favoured the assassins; they knew that they would be pursued, so they fled to an estate that belonged to the Marquess at Aubernas, thence by boat down the river to the sea, and escaped pursuit by fleeing from France.

The unfortunate Marquise lingered nineteen days. The surgeon was obliged to plant his knee against her back in order to obtain leverage for the extraction of the broken blade; but she died of the result of the poison rather than of her wounds.

The two scoundrels before they fled had sent a message post-haste to Avignon to inform the Marquess that his wife had been so treated by them that she could not possibly live. He did not hurry himself to go to Ganges, and when he arrived expressed no sympathy with her, no concern for what had been done, but pestered the dying woman about her will, for in

Avignon he had got wind of what she had done to protect it from being revoked.

The case was tried at Montpellier. The Marquess was decreed to have forfeited his title and estates, which reverted to the Crown. The Abbé and Chevalier were condemned to be broken on the wheel, but as they were beyond reach the sentence could not be carried into effect. The vicar, Perette, was sentenced to the galleys for life, and died on his way to them. Louis XIV. conferred the estates of the Marquess on the brother, the Count of Ganges; he held them till his nephew was of age, and then surrendered them to him. The Chevalier entered the service of Venice, and was killed by a Turkish bullet in Candia.

The Abbé escaped into Lippe, where, under the assumed name of Montellière, he passed as a Huguenot refugee, was received into favour, and was appointed tutor to the children of the Count of Lippe. He even aspired to the hand of a kinswoman of the Count. The latter demurred. He liked Montellière well enough, but objected that he was not noble.

"Oh! as to that, do not concern yourself," said the Abbé, "I am the Abbé de Ganges, of whom you may possibly have heard."

The horrible story was known—it had been bruited about Europe. The Count was horror-struck, and would have surrendered the miscreant to the authorities in France, but that the pupil of the Abbé pleaded for him, and he was allowed to escape into Holland, where the Count's cousin, who had lost her heart to him although knowing what a ruffian he was, followed him in disguise and married him. Six months after his marriage, a stranger accosted him in the streets

of Amsterdam. "You are the Abbé de Ganges," he said. "I avenge the Marquise," and he blew out the miscreant's brains. Who the avenger was, was never discovered.

Near Ganges is the Grotte des Demoiselles, a cave that has so long enjoyed notoriety that the smoke of torches has somewhat spoilt its freshness. It was, in fact, discovered in 1780. There are other grottoes finer, as that of Dargilan. However, the great hall called that of the Virgin, which is one hundred and forty-five feet in height, is fine; in it is a stalagmite supposed to represent the Virgin, and another forms a natural porch, eighteen feet high and nine feet wide. It demands, I think, a special aptitude of the mind to appreciate caverns. I, for my part, am so fond of the light of day that I do not go underground before my time comes.

There is another at Ganges, L'Aven Laurien, as picturesque as it is interesting from an archæological point of view. The phenomenon of this pot-hole is one very common in this limestone district. A well gapes before you descending to unknown depths. Honeysuckle, clematis, wild vine droop down it, disguise its presence, and interlace about it in the branches of the ilex and the wild fig, flinging their boughs across the orifice. Bunches of scolopendria let their long fronds droop into the depth, and laurels add their sombre verdure to the clear notes of the deciduous plants.

At 150 feet below the mouth of this pot-hole on the mountain flank is a cave, reduced by accumulations to a small opening. One can enter on all fours only. But after having passed within, a spacious chamber is reached about 120 feet in length, with branches as a



cross, but at the extremity opposite the entrance it opens abruptly on the verdant well of the aven.

It is impossible not to be struck on reaching this point at the picturesque appearance of the cave. It receives light that filters down the aven through the network of foliage above, and long trails of leaves fall from above as though to decorate the unsounded abyss that opens below. Now this cavern was a habitation of neolithic man, as has been shown by finds there of his handiwork. But think of the mothers of families residing there on the brink of that awful gulf! What agonies of apprehension they must have been in when the little urchins played puss-in-the-corner there; when they saw them totter to the verge to look up at the green descending light and the pendent leaves! If a child tripped and went down, its little body could never be recovered. But how docile and meek and mealy-mouthed the wives must have been when, if one raised her voice to scold her lord and master, he could point over his shoulder with his thumb to the unfathomed abyss where it could be silenced for ever—by a push.

Another aven again is that of Rabanel, down which M. Martel has descended. Nothing disguises the opening of this horrible well, that sinks precipitously 390 feet. The explorers found a heap of debris at the bottom.

“It took us three days to construct the scaffolding for the windlass. I went down first, fastened by a double rope, and I spun round forty-seven times in the void, happy to discover that the only way to save myself from giddiness was to count the revolutions I made.

“But what a spectacle when I reached the bottom! A



slope of rubbish inclined at thirty-five degrees which one can descend without difficulty for 60 feet, and then a great vault, like the nave of a cathedral, 300 feet long by 45 feet, and 450 feet high, lighted from above by a *lucarne* of blue sky, the light falling down which, is sifted, strange, glinting with violet reflexions from the walls, whence depended stalactites formed drop by drop like crystal tears."

Ganges is a manufacturing town, its speciality being the most delicate silk fabrics. Marvels of lightness are produced. Dyeing the silk is also done here. The workers produce stockings so fine that a pair will weigh only 185 grains. The spider does not spin a finer web, and not so strong, for these impalpable tissues are remarkably resistant. The silk is purchased in cocoons in the markets of Alais and S. Hippolyte in May and June. The weaving is done only by day, and embroidresses work with their needle adorning the tissues, and are remarkably dexterous and tasteful.

The population is divided into Protestants, who have a large circular meeting-house on the Grande Place, and the Catholics, who have a stately new church opposite the old château of the Marquesses of Ganges, in another part of the town.

Excursions may be made from Ganges to explore the gorges of the Vis and the Hérault, but there is a dearth of roads. They do not penetrate these ravines; and to traverse the glaring plateau or to thread the burning ravines in summer is impossible. They must be visited in April and May, but even March is not too early.



## CHAPTER XIV

### LE VIGAN

Schist ravines—Valley of the Arre—Wolves—Vindomagus—Fountain of Isis—Saracens—Priory—Jean Peyrenc—Persecution of Huguenots—Murder of Daudé—Execution of Bénézet—Reprisals—Avèze—Pont de Mousse—Brigand barons—A long lawsuit—The Montcalm family—Aulos—A man of many duels—The Vis—Montdardier—The Ginestous—Causse de Blandas—Navacelles—Le Vigan—The Chevalier d'Assas—Triaire.

WHEN the line leaves Ganges it leaves the white limestone crags and plunges among broken schist mountains, and the curious rugged mass of Esparon stands up before one as a fortress against the blue sky. The valley of the Arre is entered, and presently we arrive at Le Vigan in a pleasant site, a green smiling valley enclosed within a triple range, first of hills terraced up, step above step, with walls to retain the meagre deposit of soil laboriously cultivated. The second stage is one of mountains dense with chestnuts. Above this rises the rugged range of granite that forms the watershed between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Among the higher rocks sprout a few twisted and stunted beech, the relics of the ancient forests that formerly sheltered the bear, the wild boar, and the wolf. These forests have disappeared, partly through fires kindled to clear away the lurking-places of the Camisards, partly to destroy the shelter of the wolves,

mainly through the improvidence of the peasantry. It has been found simpler to get rid of the wolves by strychnine than by fire, and they are now very nearly exterminated. But the destruction of the forests has had such lamentable results that the Board of Forestry is engaged in replanting large tracts.

Le Vigan is supposed to occupy the site of the old Gallo-Roman town of Vindomagus. The name implies that a Celtic population was settled there. *Magh* signifies meadow or plain, and *vindo* is the Latin form given to the word we find in so many places to signify open country, wind-swept, sun-scorched, rambled over by sheep, that still lingers on upon the Welsh border, as Gwent. No descriptive appellation could better suit Le Vigan.

The town gathered a little way below the great sacred spring that now supplies its fountains and runnels with limpid water, once dedicated to Isis, the Egyptian goddess, who was introduced into Rome and became fashionable. It is still called the Fontaine d'Is, and the bath and remains of her temple are under the present corn market.

The Saracens penetrated the defiles of the Cevennes, and attacked and destroyed Vindomagus. They have left their traces in the terminology of certain localities about the town, as Le Champ de Mâoureses and Le Camp Sarrasin.

In the Middle Ages Le Vigan was a walled town, about a priory; the prior exercised rights of high justice alternately with the King of France, each for three years, turn and turn about, one of these clumsy, confusing arrangements only possible in those topsy-turvy days. It suffered the usual miseries also of those days from

English freebooters. It was always zealous on the national side. In the reign of Louis XV. a grandson of a barber of Le Vigan became Minister of Marine, and fitted out the fleets in the struggle against England for the supremacy of the seas and the maintenance of French dominions in North America. An epigram was written on this man, Jean Peyrenc :—

“ Pour raser l'Angleterre,  
On met au ministère  
Peyrenc dont le grand-père,  
Faisait fort proprement,  
Des barbes au Vigan.”

The most woeful time of all for the place was that of persecution of the Huguenots. The odious Edict of 1685 brought perturbation into the town and neighbourhood, which had become Calvinist. Companies of dragoons were quartered on the Protestants, and made them suffer such vexations that the townsfolk passed bodily over to the Church in less than a twelvemonth ; but thirty families, rather than submit to forcible conversion, expatriated themselves. Others were arrested and condemned to deportation. Among these was a Seigneur du Fouquet, who died on the voyage. His daughter, Madeleine, was sent to be educated in a convent, and left it only when she had abjured heresy, and she became the grandmother of the Chevalier d'Assas, a son of the soil, the hero of Clostercamp, whose statue adorns a square in Le Vigan, and of whom more presently.

On the night of October 6th, 1686, two thousand of the Reformed assembled on a little plateau near the height of l'Oiselette, visible from Le Vigan, to hear one of the pastors preach, when a body of dragoons, guided

by a traitor, Moreau, rushed upon them after having shot down the sentinels. The Protestants were armed, and seeing the military approach fired on them, and shot the captain in command; the lieutenant was stabbed by a bayonet in the belly, and died two days later. The assembly dispersed in all directions, but twenty-two persons were arrested, and eight of them, among them three women, were hung in the market-place of Le Vigan.

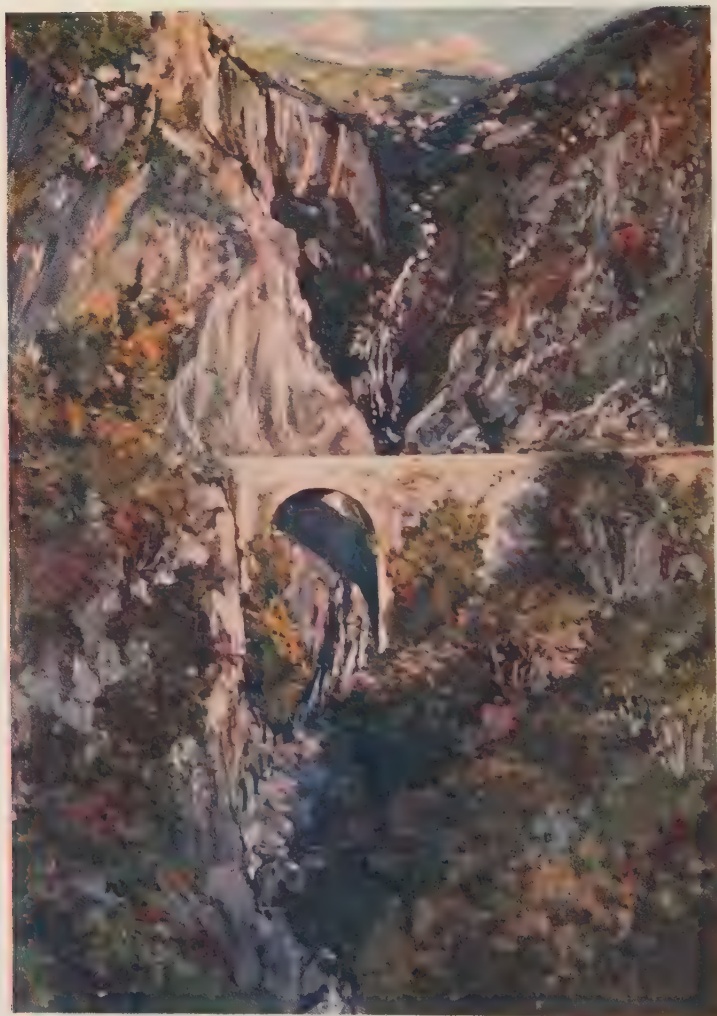
On June 5th, 1704, the delegate of Bâville at Le Vigan, named Daudé, was murdered by the Camisards. He was walking home from a little property he had at La Valette when he was assailed by shots from the insurgents, who had concealed themselves in a corn-field. They blew out his brains, but they did no harm to Claude d'Assas, who was accompanying him, other than depriving him of his sword and his embroidered cap. They were caught, and convicted on the evidence of that cap found on them. At the same time were taken two farmers, who had given them asylum. One of these was proved not to be a Camisard, and knew nothing of the plot. Nevertheless, at the instance of Judith, the widow of the murdered man, he was condemned and hung.

Two days after, the implacable widow was found dead; she had died of uterine hemorrhage.

The last of the assemblies of the Calvinists in the desert was on Sunday, January 30th, 1752. It was presided over by the pastor, Marazel, and a candidate for the ministry named Bénézet, who in his prayer invoked God "for the King, the Queen, and the Royal Family." That same evening the two preachers were in a house at Le Vigan, when it was surrounded by







THE GOAT'S LEAP, LE VIGAN

the dragoons. Marazel managed to escape; the other was conveyed a prisoner to Montpellier. Bénézet was not a full-blown pastor, and it was hoped that he would be sentenced to exile only, and his young wife made ready to accompany him. But on March 27th, by order of Louis XV., for whom he had prayed in the forest of Quinte two months before, he was sentenced to the gallows. This drama had its terrible epilogue. A few days later a woman, Marie Flavier, who was suspected of having betrayed the ministers, was found dead, with her tongue torn out of her head.

Above Le Vigan is Avèze, where is the sacred spring of Isis, the source of the Vézénobres, a torrent that flows under a natural bridge called Le Pont de Mousse. The spring is actually fed by the stream of Coudeloux, that disappears in the fissures of the calcareous rocks near Aulas. Avèze is a village built in amphitheatre above the junction of the Gleppe and the Coudeloux, which disembouch into the Arre. Avèze was founded by three Benedictine monks in the year 803. The castle commanding the village was the seat of two seigneurs, who successively occupied it, and who lived as brigands, pillaging the neighbourhood and carrying off women from the very gates of Le Vigan. In consequence of a colloquy, one of these robber nobles was induced to abandon the castle. To bring the other to reason, the civil authorities at Le Vigan implored the Constable Montmorency to lend them aid. This he did, and the castle was subjected to a formal siege in 1607; it was taken, and the sergeant was hung from the top of the keep. As to the two seigneurs, both came to a violent end. The first, Jean d'Ayémar, was assassinated on the high road by murderers sent

after him by his enemy, Jean de Vabres, who contested with him the ownership of the castle. Three years later this second seigneur was shot on his way to Arre. The castle of Avèze was a matter of a lawsuit that lasted over a century and a half. Sentence was pronounced against De Beaufort, its legitimate owner, but he refused submission to the judgment. He armed his vassals, defended himself, and killed some of the constables sent to demand the surrender of the castle. He had, however, finally to yield; and the château became later, by a judgment of the Parliament of Toulouse in 1788, the property of the family of Montcalm, descended from the Sire de Beaufort. Next year the marquess, son of the heroic defender of Quebec, came to inhabit Avèze, and it is a satisfaction to know that during the turmoil of the Revolution the venerated name of Montcalm preserved the château from being destroyed. It still belongs to the family, and is surrounded by a handsome park—as parks go in France.

Aulas, now a small village, was in the thirteenth century the chief town of the barony of Hierle; and in 1621 it was one of the five most important places in the district devoted to the principles of the Reformation, that was fortified by De Châtillon, grandson of the Admiral Coligny. Castle and walls have fallen; they were levelled after the peace of Alais. Just beyond Aulas is the Château de Clapisse, in which was born, in 1740, Henri de Celadon, Chevalier de Lanuéjols, noted for his periodic duels. M. de Celadon left home every year on a fixed day and took his way to the Isle of Basthellausse in the Rhone, near Avignon. At the same time, annually, another gentleman left Lyons, and made his way to the same spot, from which one or the other

returned wounded. This continued for twelve years ; but on the last De Celadon must have inflicted a more than ordinary wound, for on the thirteenth visit to the isle, in the following year, his adversary was not there. He withdrew, but in the fourteenth year returned, and again he with whom he had crossed swords twelve successive times was not there. Then he instituted inquiries, and ascertained that his foe had died two years previously. What the cause of the long-protracted quarrel was never came to light ; De Celadon, who died in 1810, carried the secret with him to the grave.

The source of the ravine of that strange river, half subterranean, the Vis, is best visited from Le Vigan. The Vis, a river as large as the Hérault, where it effects its junction with the latter, rises at S. Guiral, near the frontier of Aveyron. It passes Alzon, flows below the sheer limestone escarpments of the Larzac, and receives the immense spring of the Foux, after which only does it become a river ; passing between the rocks of Tude and d'Aujean it traverses a fine ravine. Montdardier (*mons arduus*) is five miles from Le Vigan, and to reach it the Causse has to be passed under from Avèze. Here the limestone is so compact that it can be exploited as lithographic stones. Much of the way is shaded by chestnuts below the white escarpments of the rocks of La Tude and of the Pic d'Anjeau, forming the edge of the Causse de Blandas, an islet of limestone separated from Larzac by the Vis, as is also the much smaller islet of Campestre, that lies between the Vis and the Virenque. These causses are strewn with dolmens and bristle with menhirs.

The Castle of Montdardier, that has been restored by Violet le Duc, occupies a well-timbered height above the

little stream that joins the Arre at Avèze. The village clusters about the hill, the extremity of which sustains the castle and the park.

In 1684, the last male heir of the Ginestous, lords of Montdardier, was a Protestant pastor. He had an only child, a daughter, whom he married to François d'Assas on condition that her descendants should assume the name and bear the arms of Ginestous. The castle is now the property of the Viscount de Ginestous at Montpellier. In the village are the remains of a hospital of the Templars.

On leaving Montdardier the *causee* appears before one in all its nudity, and the eye that has been gratified by the green woods and pastures of the valley is now smitten and half blinded by the glare of the bald limestone, with here and there only a little field of corn where some snuff-coloured earth has accumulated. Not a stream, not a spring, all the water that falls is absorbed and disappears in the fissures to fill the mysterious reservoirs that feed the rivers. Flocks of lean sheep wander about the waste and eat the herbs and bushes that attempt to grow, as well as the burnt and scanty grass. Even the droppings of the sheep are not suffered to remain and enrich the meagre soil. They are carefully collected and sold to the vinedressers of the plain.

Blandas is four miles from Montdardier. There are eleven megalithic monuments in this commune alone. Nothing breaks the monotony of the *Causse*, beyond the white plateau of which is the blue chain of distant mountains, of pure cobalt. All at once, what seems to be a fold in the plain gives way, and we stand at the edge of a tremendous depression of 960 feet. Below,



beneath the escarpments of white Jura limestone, a silver line appears winding among green meadows, and flowing from a cascade.

"The view of Navacelles produces an impression never to be forgotten. I really do not know how better to advise those who accompany tourists than to make them halt at a great tree about two hundred yards from the gap. There they should have their eyes bandaged, and they should be led to the edge of the precipice, and their backs turned to it. The bandage removed, they would see before them only the nakedness of the Causse. But let them turn about, and they would spring back filled with amazement. Even the details of the spectacle presented before them are most curious. The position of the declivity against which leans the village of Navacelles has an extraordinary resemblance to a gigantic oyster-shell, whilst to right and to left the spirals of the Vis are surmounted by precipitous rocks in fangs.

The source of this strange river is not less interesting than its cañon. In half an hour one reaches La Foux. There between the escarped flanks of the Causse the river pours out of a deep cavern, and at once puts a mill in movement."<sup>1</sup>

Neither pencil, camera, nor description can do justice to the remarkable scene. The road, a zigzag, descends into a veritable crater-like hollow down a shoulder less precipitous than the rest of the sides of the abyss, here barred with the horizontal beds of rock, there covered with rubble slides, scantily sprinkled over with box and juniper. At the bottom a ring of green meadow encircles a cone of rock. To live in Navacelles requires the constitution of a salamander, as the sun's rays are reflected from every side.

<sup>1</sup> Chante : *Un Coin des Cévennes*. Paris, Berger-Levrault.



Le Vigan is becoming annually more appreciated, and justly so, as a summer residence. The knowledge that it is abundantly supplied with pure water, that it is well drained, cleaner than most towns in the Cevennes, enjoys fresh air, and is surrounded by scenery of a high character, and that almost endless excursions may be made from it to places of great interest, have drawn to it numerous visitors. I have but touched on some of the attractions of the neighbourhood. I would recommend those who feel disposed to stay there for a few weeks to provide themselves with the little guide from which I have drawn my last quotation.

And now, finally, for the Chevalier d'Assas, whose statue adorns one of the squares.

Louis d'Assas was born at Le Vigan in 1733. He entered early on a military career, and at the age of twenty-seven was captain in the Auvergne regiment—that regiment in violet uniform which immortalised itself on the field of Parma, in the war in Italy 1733-4. The king of Sardinia, the ally of France, was in the battle. Seeing the field strewn with the violet uniforms, he turned to a French marshal at his side and asked, "Where are the rest of the violets?" "Those not cropped are still fighting," was the reply.

The action that made the name of Assas one dear to the hearts of the men of Le Vigan took place during the War of Seven Years. After the disgraceful defeats of Rossbach and Crevelt, a detachment was sent against the Prussians, and a battle was fought at Closter-camp in 1760; the corps of d'Assas lost fifty-eight officers out of eighty, and eight hundred soldiers. On the night of the 15th October, Captain Assas fell into an ambuscade. Surrounded by the enemy, who threat-

ened to run him through with their bayonets if he uttered a cry of warning, he thought only of patriotic devotion, and shouted, "A moi, Auvergne! ce sont les ennemis!" and fell pierced through and through.

In 1777, Louis XVI. granted a pension for all time of a thousand livres to the eldest son of the race. During the Revolution this ceased to be paid, but it was restored by Napoleon I., and is still received by the representative of the family.

But he is not the only hero Le Vigan has honoured by a monument. Pierre Triaire was born there in 1771. He was sergeant of artillery in Egypt, and was in the battle of the Pyramids, was at the taking of Cairo, and was in El Arish, which according to Bonaparte was one of the two keys to Egypt. It was defended by 300 men under the command of Cazal, when it was invested by the Turks. A portion of the garrison, discouraged by the desertion of his post by the General Commander in Egypt at a critical moment, and having but one desire, to return, like Napoleon, to France, paralysed the defence. Some traitors cast cords down to the Turks, who climbed over the walls. At this moment Triaire, indignant at the cowardice of a portion of the garrison, rushed to the powder magazine, of which he had the key, and blew the fort up. According to General Desaix, 3,000 Turks were destroyed by the explosion.

This was on December 30th, 1799, when Triaire was aged twenty-nine.

The statue in bronze of Triaire was inaugurated in 1891.



## CHAPTER XV

### L'AIGOUAL

Meteorological station—Battle of the winds—Warnings of floods—Different aspects of the Aigoual—The Garden of God—Meyrueis—Bramabiau—Exploration of—Valeraugue—Roman road—Barre—Limestone cirques—Causse de l'Hospitalet—Florac—Dirty streets—Mimente—Cassagnas—Fontaine du Pecher—The Dourbie—Trèves—Baume de S. Firmin—Prehistoric man—Nant—Source of the Durzon—Cantobre—S. Veran—Roquesaltes.

THE Aigoual is the hinge or knot of the inner range of the Cevennes, as Mézenc is that of the outer range. On one of its summits sits a meteorological observatory astride on the ridge of the watershed. Indeed, so exactly is it so placed, that the rain pouring off the roof on one side reaches the Mediterranean, whereas that off the other side goes to replenish the Atlantic.

The station is admirably calculated for the purpose, as thence can be watched the atmospheric currents as they sweep from the north or from the south, and the battle of the winds may be contemplated when the northern blast rolls back the moisture-laden currents from the south. This battle of the winds is an interesting phenomenon. Occasionally it happens that a veil of mist rising from the Mediterranean is swept forward, obscuring the landscape as it gathers density, and is propelled by the south-east wind till it reaches the





PEASANT GIRLS OF THE CAUSSES

Cevennes. It gradually becomes thicker and darker, packing in the valleys and then creeping up the heights. No sooner, however, has it reached the summit of the chain, than it is caught by the north-west wind and sent back in flying streamers, like the mare's tails we are accustomed to see in our skies presaging a change of wind, but with this difference, that these streamers are viewed from above.

The north wind gathering strength, as though mustering its forces against the audacious invasion of the southern vapours, rages and blusters for several days. Meanwhile the south-east wind is still thrusting forward volumes of vapour and compacting them in the gorges and valleys, cautiously throwing up a tentacle towards the heights, up lateral ravines, as though to feel whether the north wind is still on the alert. Should Boreas slacken his efforts, then the clouds climb the mountain sides like storming parties and reach the battlements. But their success is momentary only. The north wind has been dozing, and awakes to resume the combat. The heavily charged clouds, packed beyond endurance in the valleys, can make no progress, and the volleys of ice-cold wind overhead condense the mist and bring about torrential rains, accompanied by incessant explosions of thunder and lightning. In a few minutes the granitic or limestone cliffs are seamed with cascades. The silver thread that meandered through the meadows below is transformed into a yellow raging torrent, carrying before it masses of rock torn from the mountain side, trees, the wreckage of enclosures, houses even with their inhabitants. The rivers hitherto sliding through rubbly beds, vastly out of proportion to their diminutive size, swell to the brim and overflow, carrying



devastation on every side. As in the story of Puss in Boots the magician transforms himself into a mouse at one moment and into an elephant at another, so is it with these Cevenol rivers—what is a rill to-day is like the Thames to-morrow.

Those in the Observatory on the Aigoual perform a most valuable service. They can predict the coming of a flood, and they telegraph to all villages and towns that are menaced, to be on their guard, and evacuate dwellings on low ground, and remove their cattle to heights.

The inmates of the Observatory have become very weatherwise, and note many indications of an approaching tempest. One that is infallible in summer is the conduct of the bees. These shrewd insects, that have been humming and honey-gathering among the wild thyme, fly to the Observatory and cling to the panes, darkening them, and remaining motionless till the atmospheric disturbance is over.

How furious the wind may be, and what a force it exercises on the Aigoual, may be judged by looking at the refuge of the Touring Club that is fastened to the rock by chains, like the ropes of a tent.

The Mont Lozère, though higher than the Aigoual, is not so subject to these veritable tornadoes. There the wind blows almost invariably from the north. The Cevenol peasant says :

“Se lo nibou bén de l'Oual prén tons bioous et baï o l'oustal.

Se lo nibou bén de Louzero, prén tons bioous et baï o lo rego” ;

which may be rendered, “If the cloud comes from the Aigoual, take your oxen and go to the stable. If the cloud comes from the Lozère, take your oxen and go to the furrow.”

The Aigoual is a granitic mass, reaching to 5,140 feet, whereas the Roc de Malpertus, in the Mont Lozère group, rises to 5,520 feet, but this latter is far less suitable for meteorologic observation. Around the Aigoual erosion has formed a labyrinth of gorges and profound valleys, in the beds of which race torrents impatient to reach lower levels.

From the side of Merueys, the Aigoual does not present by any means an imposing appearance. It is a domed green mass, on the top of which gleam white the walls of the Observatory. From the side of La Luzette it bears some resemblance to a huge antediluvian monster in a crouching posture with fore paws extended.

On the south side the Aigoual is rugged and abrupt. Its precipices descend to great depths. The stream of the Claron there in a succession of falls drops to the depth of 3,000 feet in a very short distance.

The Aigoual has two heads, one of these, La Fayède, looking towards the sun-bathed basin of the Rhone; the other, that of the Hort Dieu, the loftiest but the least picturesque. Between these is a coombe, watered by a thousand springs that ooze from the turf and nourish a rich vegetation. It is this coombe really which is the Garden of God, as the natives term it.

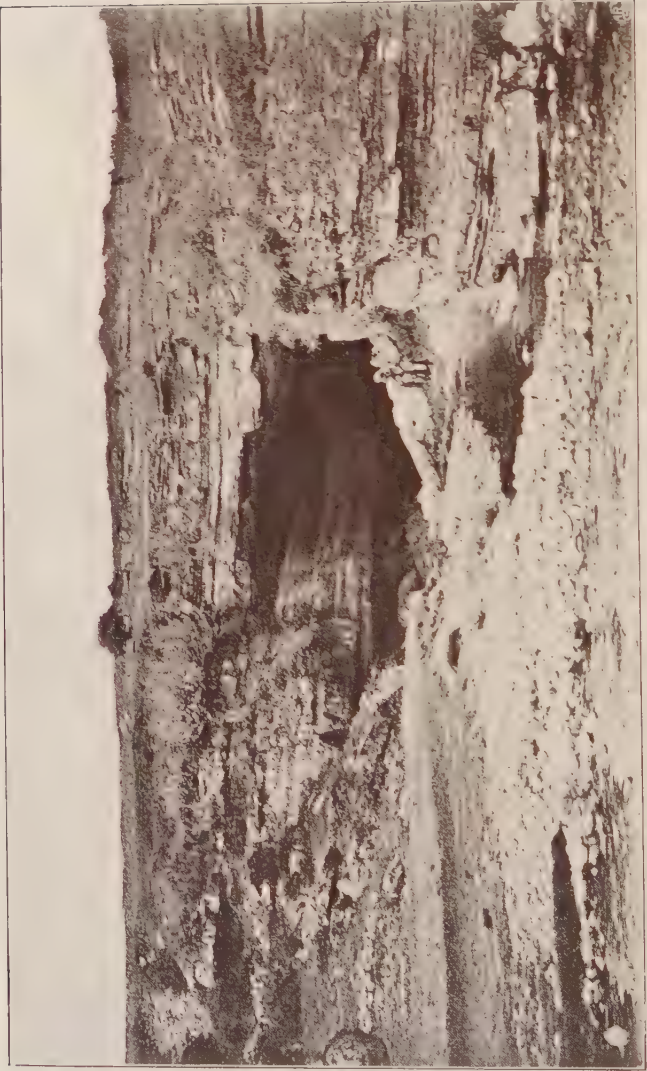
On the one side the Aigoual rises out of mulberry and chestnut woods, torn and precipitous; on the other it is smooth and velvety, wooded only with distorted beech. It has been ravaged by the merciless axe of the peasant that has left it bald and desolate. From the summit a superb view is obtained of the tossed and torn ridges of schist mountain, some rounded, but furrowed like the face of one very aged, some starting

up into peaks, some stretching out saw-like ridges, some flat-headed, according to the nature of the rock of which composed. To the north rises the Tarnon that passes by Florac, below which it enters the Tarn. A little to the north-east is the Signal de l'Hospitalet, and beyond Barre des Cevennes. The old Roman road ran over this latter col to penetrate into the heart of the Cevennes; it kept to the crest, commanding glorious views.

The Aigoual should be ascended from Meyrueis, a little town half the population of which is Protestant. Near it, and on the way, is the Renaissance castle of Roquedols.

Here one passes abruptly from the limestone to the granite, and at once notes a corresponding difference in the flora. Among the limestone rocks the pinks show as drops of blood. On the granite are none. The fields by Roquedols are white with narcissus poeticus, not a flower of that bulb is in the calcareous fields. The distance from Meyrueis to the Aigoual is just over nineteen miles, and a carriage should be taken at least as far as to Camprieu, where Bramabiau demands a visit. On the top of the Aigoual a dinner and a bed may be obtained at the Observatory. Bramabiau may also be visited from Le Vigan. The rivulet of the Bonheur, that descends from the Col de Séyre-rède near the Aigoual, after flowing over granite and schist, encounters a mass of Dolomitic limestone, through which it has bored a channel for a distance of 1,200 feet. The tunnel through which it flows is in one place open to the sky through the falling in of the roof. The name Bramabiau given to this cavern traversed by a stream is onomatopœic, and signifies





BRAMAHAT

the bellowing of a bull, as the water in time of flood gives forth angry sounds.

Nothing surprises one more than the apparent inadequacy of the means to the end attained. The Bonheur is but a small stream, yet the work it has achieved is tremendous. But it must be borne in mind that where stands Camprieu was once a lake, the water held back by the barrier of limestone, and that the accumulated force was brought to bear on the rock to effect this tunnel of drainage. Moreover, the rock itself was full of holes like a sponge, with large vaults like huge bubbles in its interior, so that it was not a solid mass through which the stream had to bore its way. It was further aided by several springs rising within the rock, all working in their several courses to effect their escape.

The exploration of Bramabiau was accomplished in June, 1888, by M. Martel and his guides. They attempted first to penetrate by the opening through which the Bonheur leaps into light again, but found that the gallery consisted of a series of ascents, with cascades and pools; and although by wading and with ladders they succeeded in reaching a considerable distance, they could not attain to the point where the stream begins to dive underground. On the following day these indefatigable explorers attacked the tunnel from above, where the Bonheur enters, and were able to descend to the point reached on the preceding day, and further to pursue their course till they came out where the stream issues, a distance as the crow flies of a kilometre.

In January, 1888, a man of Camprieu disappeared, and there was reason to suspect he had committed



suicide. As his body could not be found, it was supposed that he had flung himself down the abyss of the Bonheur ; and, in fact, when M. Martel searched the cavern he found the body wedged into a spot where, in the cave itself, the stream disappears underground for a while, to again reappear and continue its subterranean course. It goes through these vagaries twice, and perpetrates seven cascades.

"To avoid repetitions," says M. Martel in his account of the exploration, "I will say no more of the magic of magnesium light under vaults lofty as Gothic naves ; I must only ask of the reader to figure, if he can in the profound night of these caverns, the deafening roar of the falling water, the dispersion of the party groping in all directions for passages, the flicker of the feeble candles, the distant calls and signals, whistles, and horns, the cords strained, and the ladders set up against steep walls, our silhouettes magnified against the walls in shadows, and profiled against the boiling torrent, all under vaults 150 feet high and at the extremity of galleries of 300 feet.

"One portion of our course was effected only by a series of gymnastics, according to the width of the gallery that varied from three feet to ten feet, according to how far the ledges were practicable—so we crept along, a few yards above the torrent, clinging to the rock with our fingers, our breasts against the wall, or else wading in the water up to our armpits. Often our candles went out, caused by our rapid movements, or by the rush of wind that swept through the tunnel ; the drip of our soaked clothes, the difficulty of communication amidst the roar of the falling water, increased our difficulties tenfold."

Where the Bonheur escapes into daylight there is an immense rift in the rocks, and out of this the stream leaps in a fall of some dignity. Up to 1888 it was not

thought possible that the Bonheur could be the stream that issued at Bramabiau, for anything thrown in above never issued below. But the exploration by M. Martel solved the mystery. The stream sinks, filters through the rock, leaving above that which is thrown in, and issues limpid at the cascade that rushes from the entrance.

The descent of the Aigoual on the side of Valleraugue is by a thousand steps hewn in granite and schist, and at the bottom of this is the vegetable garden of the officials of the Observatory.

Valleraugue lies at the bottom of a cirque of mountains at the confluence of the rivers of the Mallet and the Clareau, and it is after their marriage that the united streams assume the name of Hérault. The descent from the Aigoual to Valleraugue occupies two hours, the ascent by the carriage road takes seven. Valleraugue is a busy factory town; the population is mainly engaged in silk spinning and weaving. The place is almost wholly Protestant. This valley of the Hérault as far as Ganges is one of the most active in silk industry in the Cevennes. The vegetation is wholly southern; the hillsides disposed in terraces are planted with vines and mulberries; and ilexes abound, providing the tanneries with their bark. "This valley," says Ardouin Dumazet, "is a synthesis of all the somewhat severe graces of the Cevenol land." The Roman road over l'Hospitalet has been already referred to. It runs from Avignon to Anduze and then ascends the crest above the Gardon, and passing under Barre stretches away to Florac. Barre itself occupies a Gallo-Roman oppidum, of which traces remain, and throughout the neighbourhood relics of the Roman tenure of the land are found. After the Col d'Aire de Côte ensues a series of frightful cirques, whose

vertical walls crumble away by degrees under the action of the weather. The flanks of the mountain are profoundly breached, and form precipices. The nature of the rock contributes to augment the savagery of the region. It is composed of schists steeply inclined towards the north, and penetrated by numerous veins of porphyry that metamorphized them. Here are needles, here masses of schist support tables of limestone. A little triangular plateau, a lost islet of the Causse, succeeds to the schists. This is the Can de l'Hospitalet.

"Here, atmospheric agencies have carved the strangest edifices. Huge calcareous hats cover and overhang slender schistous supports, shaped like the tables in a glacier. Many of these gigantic mushrooms have reeled on their corroded stalks and are thrown into a sloping position like fallen dolmens. The plateau of l'Hospitalet is both picturesque and of scientific interest."<sup>1</sup>

Florac hardly comes within the range that I have marked out for description, and yet some words must be given to it, as it was the centre of the Cevenol revolt, and was the scene of several conflicts and of the execution of Camisards.

It is a very dirty place, originally walled ; the houses were so crowded that the streets were contracted to the narrowest possible width. One has to be careful not to walk down them before eight o'clock in the morning, as all the slops are thrown from the windows into the street, and may fall on the head of the incautious passenger ; and here no warning call is given, as in the narrow lanes of old Edinburgh, to put the man in the street on his guard. What is cast forth remains where it falls till torrential rains sweep away the accumulated

<sup>1</sup> Martel : *Les Cevennes*. Paris, 1891.

filth of weeks and even months. In the Languedoc towns that reek with evil odours, in a country too where the hillsides are redolent with aromatic herbs, lavender, sage, marjoram, rosemary, beds of violets, thyme in sheets, one can hardly help repeating the lines of Bishop Heber :

“What though the spicy breezes  
Blow sweet o’er Ceylon’s isle,  
And every prospect pleases,  
Yet only man is vile.”

But it is not man who is vile, *that* he is nowhere, it is the refuse he casts about him that is offensive, and the offensiveness is a provision of nature to instruct him to remove it beyond the reach of the nose. But familiarity must breed a liking for these disgusting odours, or women would not sit on their doorsteps all day working and chatting, and let their children play about amidst festering garbage.

Florac is, in spite of dragonades and gallows and the stake, almost entirely Protestant. The large meeting-house contains nothing but a pulpit and bare benches. The Catholic church is a new and mean structure, the temple bare as a barn, the church ugly as a modern French architect can make one.

Florac is near the influx of the Mimente into the Tarnon. The three valleys of the Mimente, the Tarn, and the Tarnon lead into the inextricable labyrinth of defiles in which the Camisards were able to establish their arsenals, hospitals, and storehouses. The Mimente rises in the mountain of Bougès, whose summit is crowned by the forest of Altefage, where under three huge beech trees met the murderers of the Abbé du Chayla. At Cassagnas, a village near the source of

the Mimente, the caverns may be inspected that served the Camisards as magazines, filled with corn, wine, oil, and above all chestnuts. Roland had established here a powder factory; the saltpetre was obtained, as later during the European wars of Bonaparte, from the numerous caverns that contained the bones of extinct beasts. Drugs were procured for the wounded from Montpellier, where there were many well-wishers ready to smuggle them into the mountains. When the water-mills for grinding the corn were destroyed by the military commander of Languedoc, the Camisards reverted to the use of querns. In some of the caves whole flocks and herds were secreted; others were stored with salted meat.

Florac possesses its natural curiosity, the Fontaine du Pêcher, that discharges the water infiltrated from the plateau of Méjan. It pours forth in an abundant stream and forms a cascade, but the water is at once eagerly captured for the purpose of irrigation. During the winter and after a storm it vomits forth a torrent with a roar like that of a lion.

After a visit to the summit of the Aigoual it would be well to descend the Dourbie to Milau, reaching the Dourbie by the ravine of the Trévesel. The Pas de l'Ase is a profound gorge, 1,200 feet deep, between fiery-red dolomitic cliffs, in three stages superposed and separated by slopes of detritus. At midday, when the sun streams down on these rocks, the effect is dazzling. At Trèves, where are coal mines, is the cave called the Baume de S. Firmin, and near by the ruins of a castle.

S. Firmin was the grandson of Tonantius Ferreolus, Prefect of Gaul, who, as we have seen, was the host of Sidonius Apollinaris. He had a villa here, Trevido, as



the town was then called, and in it he died in the year 470. Firminus was educated by his uncle Noricus, Bishop of Uzès, the son of Tonantius, and he in turn became bishop of the same see, and died at the early age of thirty-seven, in the year 553, and was succeeded by his nephew, Ferreolus; so that at that time it is pretty clear bishoprics had become the perquisites of members of the great families of Gallo-Roman origin. When S. Firmin visited his grandfather or his father, at Trèves, he was wont to retire to the cave that bears his name, for reading and devotion. Possibly the dampness of this grotto may have sowed the seeds of the disorder from which he died. The cave runs deep into the mountain, and is adorned with numerous white and graceful stalactites. But it is very damp; notwithstanding this, prehistoric man occupied it, for in the first two halls of the grotto have been found old hearths, remains of feasts, broken and split bones, and fragments of badly burnt pottery.

About ninety feet above the Bâume de S. Firmin is another cave forming a great vault that is filled with water during heavy rains. Nevertheless man inhabited it at a remote period; for thence also have been excavated numerous fragments of vessels, which by their paste and ornamentation show that they belonged to the age of polished stone.

How the men of that period must have suffered from rheumatism! And it has been noticed that among the bones of prehistoric man, who was a cave dweller, rheumatic swellings of the joints are common. Usually the caves in limestone and chalk are tolerably dry. France must have teemed with peoples at that early period, for not only on the Causse, but also in the chalk



districts of Dordogne and Lot, and in the sandstone regions of Maine-et-Loire and Vienne, troglodite habitations abound.

After crossing the Col de la Pierre-Plantée, the road winds down into the valley of the Dourbie, which wriggles along at a great depth below between rocks of quartz and schist, then passes among chestnut trees, and reaches S. Jean-du-Bruel, when we are in the valley of the Dourbie. Here comes in the road from Saudières, where is a station on the line from Le Vigan to the junction on the main line opposite Roquefort; and the lower valley of the Dourbie can be visited from Le Vigan by taking the train to Saudières and a carriage thence to Milau.

Nant, a little town on the left bank of the Dourbie, has a Celtic name, very descriptive, for Nant signifies a valley or a river bottom. Nantes in Brittany has the same derivation, as has also Devon in Welsh, Dyffneint, the county of valleys. So also the Dourbie and the Durzon proclaim that they were named by Celts, for *dour* signifies water in Welsh.

The church of S. Pierre of the twelfth century is all that remains of a Benedictine abbey; the Romanesque chapel of S. Alban stands on a barren rock 2,400 feet high. But the great attraction is the source of the Durzon, as Reclus describes it:—

“A little river issuing from a deep *foux* some six or seven kilometres from Nant, near the Mas-de-Pommier, at the bottom of a cirque where walls, which are those of the Larzac, rise above the well to the height of 900 feet. There opens a great gulf, *un dormant qui ne dort pas toujours*. A slight rain on Larzac agitates it, and it begins to boil languidly in the centre of the well; but after a long rain, a storm, or the

melting of the snows, the water rises in clashing floods like a cascade turned upside down; it is no longer a murmuring stream, but a growling torrent whose voice breaks the austere silence of the cirque."

Still descending the valley, we see perched high up on the right the curious village of Cantobre, on a point of the Causse Bégon, shaded by gigantic dolomitic mushrooms, and comprised within the walls of a ruined castle that was destroyed in 1660, after its owner, Jean de Fombesse, had been executed as a coiner.

But more curious even than Cantobre is the village of S. Veran, plastered against the rocks which shoot up into needles. The ravine opening behind it describes a circus bristling with pinnacles and rocks scooped out and shaped into the most fantastic forms. The whole is commanded by an immense wall of limestone on which, and intermingled with which, are the artificial structures of a castle, the cradle of the family of Montcalm, whose most illustrious member was the Marquess who fell on the heights of Abraham, 14th September, 1759, in the struggle over Quebec, that cost also the life of Wolfe. The inhabitants of this poor hamlet, in a barren and waste land, are themselves wretchedly poor. Some one said to one of them: "So, the Montcalms left this place!" "Aye! and would to God we could leave it too," was the reply.

Below this is La Roque, whence Roquesaltes may be visited, and the Rajol, extraordinary groups of rocks little less curious than those of Montpellier le Vieux, that are also reached from the valley of the Dourbie. But these I have described elsewhere, and I am not so garrulous that I care to repeat myself.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LAND OF FERDINAND FABRE

Ferdinand Fabre—His novels—Biography—The uncle—Discouragement—Les Courbezou—Bédarieux—Ruined by a strike—Hérault—The Population—Iberians—Ligurians—Umbranici—The Gauls—Chestnuts—The Beaters—Ballad of the Chestnut-tree—The Séchoire—Fêtes in Hérault—Carotat at Béziers—Pepezuc—The Ass of Gignac—Roquefort Cheese—Le Bousquet d'Orbe—Lamalou—N. Dame de Capimont—Extinction of the hermits—Villemagne—Gorge of the Héric—S. Gervais—The church spire—The inhabitants of the Highland and of the Lowland—The Pillard.

THE number of readers of the novels of Ferdinand Fabre in England is but few, I fear; but those few recognise in him one of the most graceful and delightful of writers. His novels may be divided into two categories: those that deal with his reminiscences of early life in the Cevennes about Bédarieux, and those in which he combats the intrigues of the Jesuits, "they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins"; or who meddle with and thwart the good work of the simple country and town curés, acting as spies for Rome on the bishops and the parochial clergy.

To the first class belong—I mention only the best—*Les Courbezou*, *Julien Savignac*, *Mon Oncle Célestin*, *Barnabé*, *Monsieur Jean*, and *Xavière*. To the latter a series—*La Paroisse du Jugement Dernier*, *Le Calvaire de Mme. Fuster*, *Le Couvent de la Falosque Bergonnier*,

*L'Hospice des Enfants Assistés*; and the purely clerical romances, *Lucifer* and *l'Abbé Tigranne*.

The delicacy of touch, the exquisite delineation of character among the peasantry of the Cevennes, and the beautiful descriptions of scenery and bird life in the first category make these stories essential to a knowledge of the country I am describing in this chapter, and no one should visit it without having read at least some of them. Ferdinand Fabre was born in 1830 at Bédarieux, and was the son of an architect. After having spent his first school years in his native place, he was committed to his uncle, the curé of Camplong, and he remained with him for two years. These years left an indelible impression on his mind. The happy life in the country, the habits of the villagers, the ways of the birds, the bald causses, and the chestnut woods of the valleys; above all, the kind, simple-minded old uncle, and the grumbling, economising, but tender-hearted old housekeeper, filled the young heart so full, that it was Fabre's delight in mature life to pour forth his reminiscences of those two happy years. The uncle and the housekeeper recur again and again, the former either as the Abbé Courbezon, the Curé Fulcran, or Mon Oncle Célestin.

On leaving Camplong, Ferdinand entered the Petit Seminaire at S. Pons, and thence passed in due time to the Grand Seminaire at Montpellier. It was there that he made those experiences of clerical life that he has given forth in the remarkable novel, *l'Abbé Tigranne*, remarkable if only in this particular, that it is a novel without a woman in it. This story represents the conflict of an ultramontane bishop imposed on the diocese with his clergy, who are Gallican-minded.

Not feeling a vocation for the priesthood, Fabre went to Paris, and was at first a lawyer's clerk, but was soon left to his own resources. There he published his first literary venture, *Feuilles de Lierre*, 1853, which attracted little notice, and, disheartened, with enfeebled health, he returned to the south. Then he began to write stories concerning scenes and personages with which he was intimate. He produced *Les Courbezou* in 1862, and this "caught on" at once. The charm of style, the sweetness of mind it displayed, the keenness of insight into character, and the daintiness of description caused the literary world to realise that a writer of extraordinary merit had risen as a star on the horizon. *Les Courbezou* was crowned by the Académie. Next year, 1863, appeared *Julien Savignac*, a study of a mind affected with incipient insanity. The tale is powerful and painful. *Le Chevrier* was produced in 1868, a disappointing performance, but, with the curious perversity that characterises many an author, preferred by Fabre to his other works; and as it did not obtain success as a novel, he converted it into a drama, which was also a failure. *Barnabé*, an excellent study of a class of men now completely passed away, appeared in 1875. Fabre died in Paris on 11 February, 1898.

Bédarieux is, or rather was, a busy manufacturing town, with forges and glass works, indebted for its coal to the neighbouring mines of Grassensac. But a few years ago a strike took place. The ironmasters and glassmasters could not meet the demands of the men, and forges and factories have since been closed, and the population has dwindled to nearly half what it was. This also has seriously affected the miners of Grassensac.

Bédarieux is on the Orbe at the confluence into it

of the Courbezon. The station is three-quarters of a mile from the town. There is nothing of interest in the place itself, except the church of S. Alexandre of the fifteenth century, and that not remarkable. For a centre of excursions it is good, but preferable is Lamalou-les-Bains, where are excellent hotels; but Bédarieux must be tarried at for a few nights if Rochefort, Lunas, and Boussagues are to be visited, or much time will be lost in the trains. Bédarieux is the station of bifurcation of three lines from the main trunk from Clermont to Béziers, and any one who has had experience of French lines will know that as often as not this implies a tedious halt, perhaps of an hour, at the station where a change has to be made.

The nature of the mountains through and by which flows the Orb differs greatly from that of the schisty Cevennes—the Cevennes proper—and the limestone of the causses and of the garigues. They are a ripple rather than a billow, and being sheltered from the north winds by the high range at their back form a sort of natural hothouse, in which the sweetest fruits of a southern clime ripen readily, where the spring comes earliest and the autumn sun lingers longest.

In the Languedoc plain, in Roussillon, even to Perpignan, the icy blasts from the Cevennes are dreaded. The olives, the planes, the mulberries are bent, leaning towards the south, permanently given this incline under the influence of these cruel winds. They scourge Béziers and Montpellier as with a cat-o'-nine-tails dipped in water that has been frozen. But these winds pass over Bédarieux and the valley of the Orb to expend their violence elsewhere. Here in the upper reaches of the Orb the vine, the fig, the olive, the



pomegranate, the almond, the nettle-tree luxuriate, untortured, unnipped.

Villages are many, clustering as so many sets of beehives in every warm and sheltered nook that faces the sun, and has a mountain wall at its back.

And it is precisely here, where least wanted, that a prodigal nature lavishes heating material in beds of anthracite and other coal.

"The peasants of the low hills of the Monts d'Orb are less accessible to superstition than those of the highlands, but they have less character and veritable greatness. The sun has not only heated their land, it has also sucked up from their brains all those vapours full of poetry that make of the men of the causses a type original and picturesque. Between the inhabitant of Servier, who never sowed a seed, and he of Camplong, who gets fuddled on new wine, the distance is immeasurable, and yet they are parted by nothing more than the granite mass of Bataillo."

This is what Fabre says of the natives. There are two types not due to difference of blood, but of surroundings and of occupations. We are now in the department of Hérault, of Lower Languedoc, and I may be allowed a few words on the mixture of peoples of diverse origin that have been fused together into a homogeneous race.

From a period before history began, this country was inhabited by populations of diverse origins, habits, and language, drawn thither by the delicious climate, its natural resources, or simply by the chance of migration. One fact characterises the establishment of the tribes or nationalities in these parts; so far as we can judge, it was their attitude towards the people who preceded

them. If some of them swept away the indigenous race, more often they planted themselves beside the earlier population peaceably and fused with them. Most of these invaders seem to have possessed gentle manners, and were not goaded on by the passion for extermination, for which there was no provocation or need, as the land was wide and rich enough to sustain all. This mode of colonisation had the result of filling Lower Languedoc with very heterogeneous inhabitants, the complexity of which explains the apparent contradictions of early writers. But on one point these writers are unanimous: the variety of races or mixtures that occupied the land in *Gallia Narbonensis*. In the first century before Christ, Cicero notices this; and in the fourth century after Christ, Ausonius sang: "Who can record all thy ports, thy mountains and thy lakes, who the diversity of thy peoples, their vestures and their languages?"

The most ancient inhabitants recorded were the Iberians, who extended their domination over the Spanish peninsula and to the Rhone on the east, which formed the boundary between them and the Ligurians. But at a time difficult to determine these latter crossed the river and invaded the territories of the Iberians. But instead of expelling the conquered peoples, the Ligurians, having an aptitude for absorption, mingled with those whom they had subdued and formed the mixed race of the Iberian-Ligurian. There was, however, already in the land a third nation, that of the Umbranici, apparently the same as the Umbrians of Northern Italy. They have left their name at Ambrussum, now Pont-Ambroise, on the Vidourle. Twenty-three inscriptions remain, mostly in Gard, in an unknown

tongue, but written in Greek characters, that bears an affinity alike to the Ossian and Umbrian language in Italy.

The Greek trade of Marseilles spread through the land. At Murviel, a cyclopean enclosure, not many miles from Montpellier, have been found Greek coins of Marseilles.

In the fourth century before the Christian era a new ethnic element came to add to what already existed. The Gauls appeared in the land. A branch of this stock was that of the Volci. These established themselves between the Rhone and the Garonne, and extended their authority over the Ibero-Ligurians. These new arrivals seem to have treated the conquered much as the Ligurians had the Iberians. They established themselves peaceably among them or alongside of them. This was the more easy, for, as Strabo says, though the Gauls belonged to a wholly different stock, yet they resembled the Ligurians in their mode of life.

Their dominion was not for long—not for more than two centuries—for in B.C. 121 their country was conquered by the Romans.

Such, then, is the origin of the population of Lower Languedoc, and explains the diverse origin of the names of rivers, mountains and towns, some Iberic, some Celtic, some Latin, some of undiscoverable derivation, given perhaps by the Umbrian colony.

The staple of life in the Cevennes, mainly in the southern portion, is not corn, but the chestnut. That is why we see this tree everywhere, old and twisted, but sturdy still, young and vigorous when recently planted. But unhappily a malady has broken out among them, the cause of which has not been discovered with certainty, nor has any remedy been found efficacious. In some years the leaves fall in September, and the fruit

comes to nothing, reducing the people to a condition almost of famine. In order to preserve the nuts through the winter and spring and prevent the sprouting, they are subjected to desiccation in *clèdes* that may be seen as a part of the outbuildings of every farmhouse and of many cottages.

The Spanish chestnut is a beautiful tree. It was indigenous in England. A few years ago I was draining a field by the river, and cut down to glacial clay nearly nine feet below the surface, and lying on this was a huge tree, black as ebony. With great labour I had it removed to the sawmill, thinking it to have been black bog oak. It was Spanish chestnut, and since then others have been found in the same valley. It seems willing to grow anywhere. The peasants build up terraces no larger than a doormat, and it grows there. But where there is plenty of soil it will grow much more vigorously than on a ledge of rock.

"I wish," said R. L. Stevenson, "I could convey a notion of the growth of these noble trees ; of how they strike out boughs like the oak, and trail sprays of drooping foliage like the willow ; of how they stand as upright fluted columns like the pillars of a church ; or like the olive, from the most shattered bole can put out smooth and youthful shoots, and begin a new life upon the ruins of the old. Thus they partake of the nature of many different trees ; and even their prickly top-knots, seen near at hand against the sky, have a certain palm-like air that impresses the imagination. But this individuality, although compounded of so many elements, is but the richer and the more original. And to look down upon a level filled with these knolls of foliage, or to see a clan of old unconquerable chestnuts cluster like herded elephants upon the spurs of a mountain, is to rise to higher thoughts of the powers that are in Nature."

I believe that the reason why we have so few old chestnuts in England, why we have not woods of them, is that the rabbit dearly loves its sweet bark when young. In planting chestnuts they must be protected by wire, or every one will be peeled in early spring by these wretched rodents. The beating of the trees and the gathering of the fallen chestnuts is a great festival among the Cevenol, as is the vintage in the plains. I will give an account of the beginning of the gathering in from the pen of Ferdinand Fabre. I must premise that the mountaineers from the bald causses come down to the zone where the precious tree grows and hire themselves out as beaters and gatherers. A body of men, mostly young, arrive in a village waving branches, and is met by the old people in the street.

“Our old men and women, very attached to the Fête of the Chestnuts which brightened their youthful years, had quitted the fireside and had advanced to the first house of the village. There they drew up in file, ranged against the south wall. From one end of the line to the other the features were grave with wrinkles and furrows, softened on some by their white hair. Warped, bowed, shivering, they looked ahead with glassy eyes kindled with curiosity. The young folk of the mountain were about to pass by and they desired to see them, and in seeing them revive recollections of their own young days, and warm themselves thereat.

“At the first house the arrivals halted; then waving their boughs in salutation, asked altogether, ‘Good folk, how go the chestnuts this year?’ ‘Very well, children,’ replied the old people. Then a little woman, aged eighty-five, detached herself from her nook in the wall and advanced towards the beaters. ‘You have not forgotten, friends, the Complaint of

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the Chestnut Tree?’ ‘To be sure, the Complaint of the Chestnut Tree,’ cried all.

“From the midst of the grove of boughs carried in their hands, and which seemed suddenly to have taken root in the soil of the road, rose the *Complainte* (ballad), so popular among the Cevenols of the south, and which, like most of their popular songs, express their toil, their sweat, their sighs of hunger at last assuaged by labour.

“Quand le châtaignier est planté  
Il monte, monte, monte !  
Quand le châtaignier est planté  
Nous buvons largement à sa santé.

Quand le châtaignier est en fleur,  
Belle, belle, belle !  
Quand le châtaignier est en fleur,  
Le pays prend son odeur.

Quand le châtaignier a grainé,  
Il graine, graine, graine !  
Quand le châtaignier a grainé,  
Chacun danse dans son pré.

Quand les châtaignes nous avons,  
Bonnes, bonnes, bonnes !  
Quand les châtaignes nous avons,  
Nous les mangeons, puis nous mourons.

“After the fourth couplet the ballad was interrupted. Our Cevenols raised their boughs, brandished the leaves, and made therewith the sign of the cross.

‘On your knees!’ said the old woman, extending her hand. The beaters knelt at once. Then, all at once, from a thousand sturdy breasts young for the most part, rolled forth the final verse of the *Complainte du Châtaignier*. It was as grand, as beautiful, as sublime as any psalm, any hymn I have heard in any church.



“Cévennes pleins de rochers,  
Hautes, hautes, hautes !  
Cévennes pleins de rochers,  
Faites nous forts et religieux.”

When the chestnuts have been gathered, then in November they are dried in *séchoirs*. These are small square structures with a door and window on one side, and on the other three or more long narrow loopholes, called in the country *carésseïros*, that are never closed. A fire of coals is lighted and kept burning incessantly in the drying-house, and the smoke passes through shelves on which the chestnuts are laid, in stages, and escapes by the loopholes. To any one unaccustomed to the atmosphere in these *séchoirs*, it is hard to endure the smoke, and one stands the risk of being asphyxiated. Nevertheless the peasants spend two months in the year in these habitations, amidst cobwebs and soot, swarming with mice and rats, and the smoke at once acrid and moist, for in drying the chestnuts exude a greenish fluid that falls in a rain from the shelves. The natives do not seem to mind the dirt and smell of these horrible holes. Moreover, if there be in a village any one suffering from phthisis, at the end of autumn the patient is taken by the relations in his or her bed, and this is deposited in a corner of the *séchoir*. The sick person is not allowed to leave the drying-house, and it is a singular phenomenon that not infrequently, under the influence of the heat and the sulphurous smoke, the tuberculosis is arrested, and the sufferer lives on for many long years.

It is economy that drives the peasants to live in the drying-houses. As they are forced to light fires for the chestnuts, they extinguish those on their hearths in the

farm-houses. Why have two fires going when one will suffice? So the peasant bids his wife and children cook their soup at the brazier in the *séchoir*. And he himself, driven under shelter by the rain and cold, brings to the common hearth his hatchet and long strips of wild chestnut, of which he fashions hoops for barrels or baskets for the collectors of olives. Through the two months from the Jour des Morts to Christmas Eve the *séchoir* is the village centre; to it flock the poorest members of the commune, who have no drying-houses of their own.

The fêtes in Hérault are often very curious, and evidently date from an early period, and are reminiscences of paganism.

For instance, the Carotat at Béziers on Ascension Day has nothing Christian about it. Till 1878, on the eve, the servants of the Consuls were wont to parade the town with music going before them, and knock at the doors of houses asking for contributions. They were followed by a clumsy wooden structure covered with hide to represent a camel; and all largesses received were put into the mouth of the beast.

Next day, to the sound of cannon and bells, the Corporation assembled in three ranks, led by the Provost bearing a cake decked out with ribbons and attached to his left arm, attended by a servant carrying a basket of bread, followed by the camel. This fête is dead. But what does survive at Béziers and at Montpellier and elsewhere is the Danse des Treilles at the fête called Roumarin. The young people, in their gala dresses and adorned with bunches of rosemary, carry hoops similarly decorated, with which they perform the evolutions of a graceful ballet in which there are seven

figures ; and the bystanders pelt them with violets. At Montpellier the dance is considered to be a commemoration of the marriage of Peter II. of Aragon to Marie de Montpellier, June 15th, 1204.<sup>1</sup>

At Béziers no public festival formerly took place without a preliminary visit to Pepezuc, a mutilated white marble statue with the head knocked off and replaced by one of common stone. It is obviously a representation of a Roman emperor, perhaps of Augustus. It stood on a fluted column, and on the base is inscribed P.P.E.S.V. But the common story was that it represented a gallant officer who had driven out the English from the town, of which they had obtained possession. Pepezuc was wont to be dressed up and decorated with flowers. That is stopped, as the statue has been removed to the town museum.

The Ass of Gignac continues to be fêted. The town was besieged by the Saracens. One night, after a hard day's fighting, the defenders, wearied out, had gone to sleep, when an ass brayed long and loud. His master had forgotten to feed him, and this he resented. The man awoke, for the braying of an ass would rouse the Seven Sleepers, and he saw that the enemy was escalading the walls. He roused the garrison, and they succeeded in hurling back the ladders. However, the deliverance was temporary, for a few days later the town was captured and burnt. In gratitude for what the ass had done, the people of Gignac instituted an annual commemoration, in which they march a figure of an ass through the street to the sound of fife and tabor. Then in reminiscence of the fight a contest takes place in a field called Le Senibelet, in which one duellist wears

<sup>1</sup> Ferd. Troubat : *Danse des Treilles*, Toulouse, 1900.





CHEESEMAKERS, ROQUEFORT

a huge helmet, preserved in the town hall, to represent the Christian warrior, whilst the adversary has a turban on his head. They fight with sticks of the *garrigou*, that grows on the otherwise barren limestone, till the Mussulman drops with exhaustion, when the victor is divested of his helmet and conducted in triumph to the house where the ass is supposed to have brayed.

A visit should certainly be made to Roquefort, where the famous cheese is made from ewe's milk. The town is built not only against, but into a rock of limestone that has been riddled with caves natural and artificially bored to serve as cellars, in which the cheese is kept at an even temperature, and is supposed then to attain its special flavour. The cheese is, however, not all made there; it is brought there from the Larzac, that maintains enormous flocks of sheep, and indeed from throughout the arrondissement of Ste. Affrique. The cheeses are conveyed to Roquefort, there to mature. The blue mould in them is not, however, due to natural mildew in the cheese, but to mildewed crumbs of bread blown into the curd in process of formation. The cheeses are ranged on stages of wooden boards by over nine hundred girls in short petticoats, called *cabanières*, whose special duty it is to attend to the cheeses. They are clean, good-natured, happy-faced lasses, who marry early, usually at sixteen. It is extraordinary if one is still unmarried at nineteen.

I have described the making of the cheese in my *Deserts of Central France*. The natural caves in Roquefort number twenty-three, and there are thirty-four in all. The rocks in part of the town overhang the houses.

At Lunas, commanded by the escarpments of the



Pioch, there is not much more to be seen than the ruins of a castle and a church partly Romanesque. Le Bousquet d'Orb occupies a picturesque situation, on a mamelon in the midst of a basin. On the highest terrace the church stands up boldly. This is a place with mines of coal and copper. Boussagues is a very ancient village, once a town enclosed within walls, and possessing two churches and two castles. The town has retained its medieval physiognomy—and its smells.

The train from Bédarieux to Lamalou follows the Orb, that flows through a green and smiling plain. Properly the Orb should pursue its further course due south, but a low range of hills obstructs the way, and the river is forced to turn abruptly round and flow due west. The hills to the south rise; on a lofty isolated height above green forest gleams white a pilgrimage chapel. We pass on to Lamalou, where every comfort may be obtained.

Lamalou is picturesquely situated in a narrow lateral valley of the Orb, in the midst of the buttresses of the Espinouse, or rather of the Caroux, that links the Cevennes proper to the Montaigne Noire. This thermal station is growing in importance, the waters being thought specially and peculiarly beneficial in spinal troubles, above all in cases of S. Vitus's Dance. In winter it has but 900 inhabitants, but in summer arrive 10,000 visitors, and a special train-de-luxe starts twice a week from Paris for Lamalou, enabling the journey to be made in fifteen hours.

A favourite walk is to N. D. de Capimont, which occupies from two hours to two and a half. This is a little chapel on the height above the village, with a hermitage attached. There is no hermit there now.

The last died five years ago. He was found dead in his cell, some days apparently after that he had expired. He was the last, and there are not likely to be any successors to an Order that was by no means an element of good in the country. Ferdinand Fabre has given a graphic account of the hermits in *Barnabé*, and also in *Mon Oncle Célestin*.

"I am in despair," says he. "Letters from the South inform me that one by one the hermitages are being closed; that the hermits, knapsack on back, are quitting their solitary chapels, and that they do not return. Did the order for their suppression issue from the Prefecture or from the Episcopal Palace? It is supposed from both simultaneously. What a pity! O how the picturesqueness of our South will be the poorer thereby."

The hermits, calling themselves Free Brothers of S. Francis, were a begging fraternity; they rambled about the country selling sacred pictures, rosaries, and other religious trifles; they frequented the fairs and the taverns, and neither ate nor drank in moderation, and their morals were not irreproachable. But they served a purpose. They attended to the solitary chapels, and made ample provision for the pilgrims who visited these shrines.

"Mon Dieu!" says Fabre; "I know well enough that the Free Brothers of S. Francis, as they loved to entitle themselves, had allowed themselves a good deal of freedom, more than was decorous. For instance, it was not particularly edifying at Bédarieux on a market-day to see the hermits from the mountains round about leave the tavern of the Golden Grapes staggering, jolting against one another, shouting, and at nightfall describing ridiculous zigzags as they went on their way straying along the roads leading to their solitary dwellings.

“But as these monastically habited gentry in no way scandalised the population of the South, who never confounded the occupants of the hermitages with the curés of the parishes, why sweep away these fantastic figures, who, without any religious character, recruited from the farms, never educated in seminaries, peasants at bottom, in no way priests, capable, when required, to give a helping hand with the pruning-knife in the vineyard or with the pole among the olives, or the sickle among the corn. Alas! they had their weaknesses, and these weaknesses worked their ruin.”

At the French Revolution the Free Brothers of S. Francis did not creep into their shells and hide their heads there—they knew better than that. Though not even in minor orders, they did something smack of the clerical, and might be sent *à la lanterne*. So they doffed the brown habit and donned the blouse, went to farmers and served them till the tyranny was overpassed. In 1806 the curés of the parishes were glad to find any pious laymen who would keep the chapels clean and serve at Mass on the days when pilgrims streamed to them. The men thus installed assumed a Franciscan snuff-coloured habit, and called themselves, without other justification, Brethren of S. Francis.

When he was a child, Fabre says, there were six hermitages in the upper valley of the Orb. Now most of the chapels are falling to decay, as there is no one authorised to look after them. But N. D. de Capimont is still in considerable repute, and is frequented by crowds on the Feast of the Assumption. A curious old town, situated high, may be visited from either Lamalou or Bédarieux. This is Villemagne, with a ruined abbey and mint. The abbey was founded by Charlemagne in 780. The church of the parish is dedicated to S. Majan,

and is a vast building ; the choir alone was erected in the fourteenth century. It contains a curious altar of the sixth century, now used as a bénitier. The old church of S. Gregory, of the thirteenth century, long used as a granary, has been restored. The old town is full of ancient buildings, in narrow streets, and is very curious.

But the finest excursion of all is that to the gorge of Héric. For this it is advisable to take the train to Colombières and walk thence, or drive from Lamalou. The station of Trivalle is close to the entrance of the gorge, but from that side it can rarely be ascended, as the path built up against the precipice is often broken down and not repaired. But from the other side the ascent is easily made. The view up the ravine to the needle rocks of granite above is hardly to be surpassed for beauty of colour and form. The sides are precipitous for 900 feet. By the path one can reach the village of Héric, lost at the extremity of this tremendous ravine, and by this is its only means of communication with the outer world ; and so dangerous is the path that there is a saying in the country that no inhabitant of Héric dies in his bed. What I have said before I repeat here. None of the gorges in the Cevennes resemble one another ; they have not even a family likeness, for the Caroux from which the stream descends, and into the bowels of which this gorge is cleft, is of granite ; and what resemblance can there be between granite and basalt or dolomitic limestone ? When I visited the ravine, snow powdered the silvery-grey needles at the head and lay in the laps. So seen, the picture of that ravine is indelibly impressed on my memory as one of surpassing savage beauty.

S. Gervais is a picturesque little town situated at the junction of the Casselouvres and the Mare, that takes its rise in the Signal de l'Espinouse, 3,380 feet. Its church has the peculiarity of the spire being a grove of trees and a bed of wallflowers that have rooted themselves in the stonework and been allowed to grow there unmolested. The town, notwithstanding that it preserves many relics of the Middle Ages and a general aspect that is venerable, is but modern compared with the older town, now abandoned, that was built on a jagged rock, its ruins mingling with the rock and scarce distinguishable from it. The more modern town is planted on a hillock standing by itself; the streets are narrow, scrambling up the side of the hill, and the houses are dingy, dirty, and dilapidated. The still more modern town lies below the hill. There is an intermittent spring in the side of the Hôtel Soulié. At Saint Gervais at fair time may be noted the contrast that exists between the inhabitant of the sun-baked, semi-tropical lower land, rich in oil, honey, and wine, and the mountaineer who descends there to sell his cattle. Those who live in the sheltered valleys are clothed in stout broadcloth and serge, or bottle-green velvet. They arrive at a fair or market, noisy, sprightly, their mules laden with corn and fruit. On the other hand, the inhabitant of the heights of the Espinouse or Larzac is grave, reserved, uncommunicative, clothed in a garment of coarse cloth called *grisaoud*, followed by interminable flocks of sheep, goats, and oxen.

#### At Bédarieux—

"They trade, they chaffer over almonds, olives, honey, cocoons, wheat, the produce of a sunny nature; at Saint Gervais is a cattle market, and is of a graver character, for

though a man can dispose lightly of the fruits of the earth that he has tilled, of the tree he has planted, it is not without a pang that the shepherd can separate himself from the beast he has nourished. Between the pastor and his flock do there not exist, moreover, mutual sentiments of affection, even of love, that defy all psychology ? ”

But the market is not one of cattle and corn only, it is of human beings as well, for hither come the shepherds to hire boys to attend during the year on the sheep and herds of swine. These lads are locally called *pillards*, and the token that one has been engaged is that the shepherd buys the boy a pair of new sabots out of his own money, a sort of investiture in the pastoral office. These lads and the shepherds lead a lonely life in the mountains. The boys are not unkindly treated, for the Cevenol, if rough and silent, has a gentle and kindly heart. But what a life for a growing boy in wild nature, among mountains and shrubs, birds of all kinds, and creeping things innumerable, and at night with the stars shining above his head with a sharpness and intensity as though they stabbed him to the heart, but left an exquisite pain behind. He learns to know the signs of the times, the winds, the voices of nature, to distinguish one bird's note from another, and to ascertain the virtues of the aromatic herbs on the limestone cause. The life may be hard, but it is healthy both to body and mind and soul.





## CHAPTER XVII

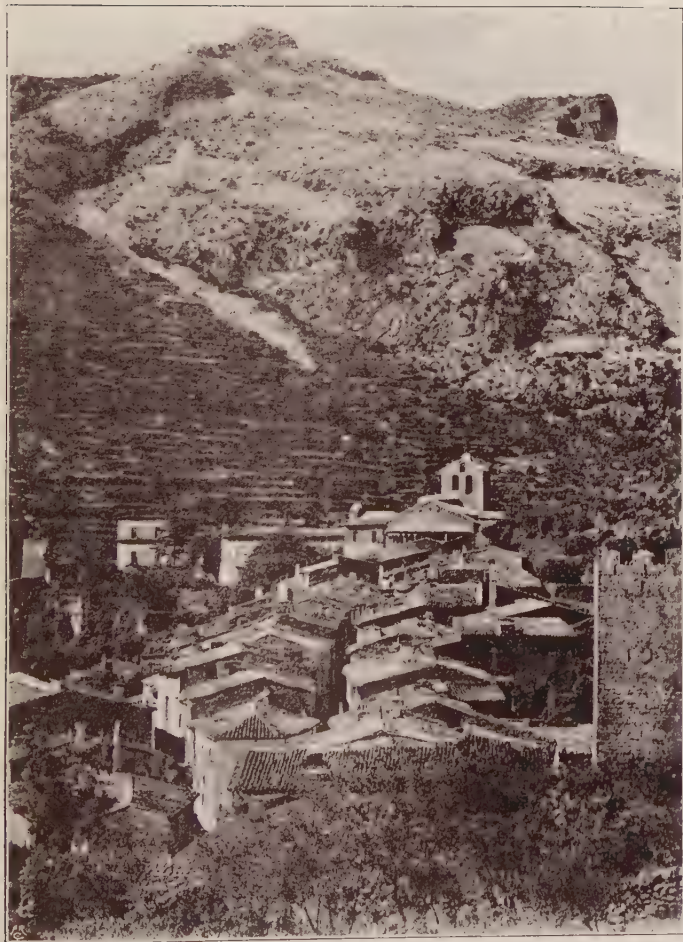
### THE HÉRAULT

Clermont l'Hérault—Church and castle—Aimar Guilhem—Deserts the cause of his Count—Peyrolles the Potter—N.D. du Peyrou—Villevette—Military cloth factory—Its semi-feudal organisation—Valley of the Dourbie—Mourèze—The quarries—Decomposition of the rock—Church—Lodève—The Count—Contest with him carried on by S. Fulcran—The bishops—Perjury—The people gain the victory—Cathedral—S. Michel-de-Grammont—Dolmen—Caverns—L'Escalette—Larzac—Le Caylar—Flora of Larzac—Abdias Maurel—La Couvertorade—Aniane—Gorges of the Hérault—Mills—S. Guilhem-le-Désert—Guillaume de Courtenez—His parting from his wife—His visit to Paris—Church—Monuments—Cloister—Saracen inscriptions—Farewell to the Cevennes.

AN admirable centre for several expeditions of no little interest is Clermont l'Hérault, where is a good hotel.

Clermont, though called l'Hérault, is not actually on the river of that name, though near it. The town is built at the base and up the sides of a steep hill crowned by a ruined castle.

The church is one of the very few in the department with side aisles to the nave. Indeed, the form affected throughout southern Languedoc is a vast nave without pillars, and chapels between the buttresses. This church was begun in 1275 and ended in 1313. It has a seven-sided apse. Over the west window is a gallery with



S. GUILHEM-LE-DÉSERT



machicolations, so that it could be used as a fortress, and melted lead or boiling pitch could be thrown down on besiegers. Narrow, steep, and dirty streets climb the hillside to the castle, now enclosed within the walls of a convent; little remains, however, but a keep of this once sumptuous seignorial residence of the barons of Clermont. Formerly it consisted of a semicircular ring of wall defended at intervals by seven round towers, and with an eighth on the side of the chord of the arc. The view from the height extends over the plain watered by the Hérault and the Lergue, that begins at the feet of the Lodève Mountains and extends to the low range of the Taillades de Gignac. From thirty to forty towns, villages, and hamlets dot this plain.

In 1209 Aimar Guilhem, seigneur of Clermont, was the ally of the unfortunate Raymond, Count of Toulouse, against whom Innocent III. hurled the thunders of excommunication because he would not butcher and burn his subjects, who had embraced the Albigensian heresy; and Aimar was accordingly involved in his sentence. Innocent called together the riff-raff of Europe to join in a crusade against Raymond, promising life eternal and absolution from all sins to those who would join in an indiscriminate slaughter of the Albigenses, and placed Simon de Montfort at the head of this horde of the Children of God, as they called themselves, who swept over the land committing indescribable horrors. After the massacre of the inhabitants of Béziers by the crusaders, Aimar retired to his castle and awaited events. His conduct may have been prudent, as he saved the town from sack and slaughter, but it was unworthy of him; as had he roused the country of Lodève, he would have menaced the rear of Simon de

Montfort, and might have forced this commander of the soldiers of the Papacy to deal less cruelly with the seigneurs of Languedoc, whom he robbed of their domains with impunity.

On the *Place* under trees is a monument, surmounted by a bust of Peyrolles, a potter of Clermont, who composed verses in the Languedoc dialect. He became jealous of the fame acquired by Jasmin, the hairdresser of Agen, the great vernacular poet, and sent him a challenge. "I will go to Montpellier any day and hour you choose to name. Let four men of literary notoriety give us three themes on which to compose poems in twenty-four hours; and let us be shut up in one room, with no admission of any one to us or of anything but our food—and see who in the time will turn out most poetry." Jasmin replied that he declined the contest. For his part, he could not produce verses as fast as Peyrolles could pots; his powers did not reach further than the composition of two or three verses in a day.

A delightful walk or drive is to Mourèze, up the valley of the Dourbie. On the col crossed by the road leading into this valley is the quaint chapel of N. D. du Peyrou. It is pointed, with an immense porch composed of two flying buttresses sustaining a roof. A chapel at the west end is out of line with the axis of the principal building. The nave was rebuilt or altered at the Renaissance. In the choir on one side are oval frames containing representations of girls who have made their first communion, in white paper cut out with scissors, and on the other side similar frames contain nuptial crowns. A largely attended pilgrimage visits this chapel on Monday in Easter week. This



IN THE CIRQUE, MOURÈZE





shrine is at the entrance to the beautiful basin of Villeneuve, rich with cork trees, micocouliers (*Celtis Australis*), mulberries, chestnuts, tall ancient cypresses, pines, caper bushes, and the kermes-oak.

Here in the bottom, by the little river, is the industrial settlement of Villeneuve. An avenue of planes leads to a wall, with a gateway in it, over which is the inscription, "Honneur au travail." Up to 1848 it bore the title "Manufacture royale." This is the last existing example of the factories established by Colbert in 1666 for the weaving of cloth for the Levant trade, and for each piece of cloth woven was received a bonus of ten francs. It was found that the trade in the Levant of French cloth was failing owing to English competition. Colbert founded this among other colonies of workmen to ensure that the cloth exported was of good quality, and agents in Constantinople and in Pondicherry received and sold it. In order to protect the establishment during the religious wars that desolated the Cevennes, the settlement was surrounded by a rampart, crenelated and flanked by redoubts. Within are the factory, a church, and the houses of the artisans, arranged on a formal plan. The colony had its own municipal government, and elected its own mayor. Every night the drawbridge was raised and the gate fastened.

Villeneuve owns a considerable territory around it, and the land is parcelled out among the workmen engaged in the factory. Each family has its garden, its vineyard, and its plantation of mulberries, so that when work is slack in the factory there is plenty of occupation for the hands in the fields.

For more than two centuries Villeneuve has been

in private hands. It had failed to be a success financially in 1703, and was disposed of to M. Castaméd'Aurac, who built the church. A century later, in 1803, it became the property of the family of Maistre, and it has remained in the same hands ever since.

It now turns out exclusively cloth for the army and uniforms for colleges and railway officials. Long stretches of dark blue and crimson cloth are seen in the meadows outside the walls, destined to be cut into the jackets and breeches of the military. Villeneuve has retained much of its curious patriarchal organisation. There is no village outside the embattled walls ; of the ninety-eight cottages all are given rent free to the artisans, and nothing more is exacted of them save respect for rules of decency and cleanliness. Here no slops may be thrown out of the windows, nor may birds' nests be molested. These restrictions have been indignantly protested against by the Radicals, who charge the organisation of the little community with being bound down by the chains of feudalism. Where is liberty if a householder may not throw his slops down on the head of any one passing in the street ? Where is equality if the urchins of Clermont may rob robins' nests and not those of Villeneuve ? Where is fraternity if the artisans may not get fuddled together and roar and riot in drunken bands ?

The road ascends the valley of the Dourbie, but to reach Mourèze it makes a circuit round the conical mountain, Le Puy de Bissou, on the summit of which is a chapel where once lived a hermit, but to which no pilgrimages are now made. A bridge has been thrown over the river, and a new road has been begun which will give speedier access by carriage to Mourèze, but which can





GROUP AT MOURIZE

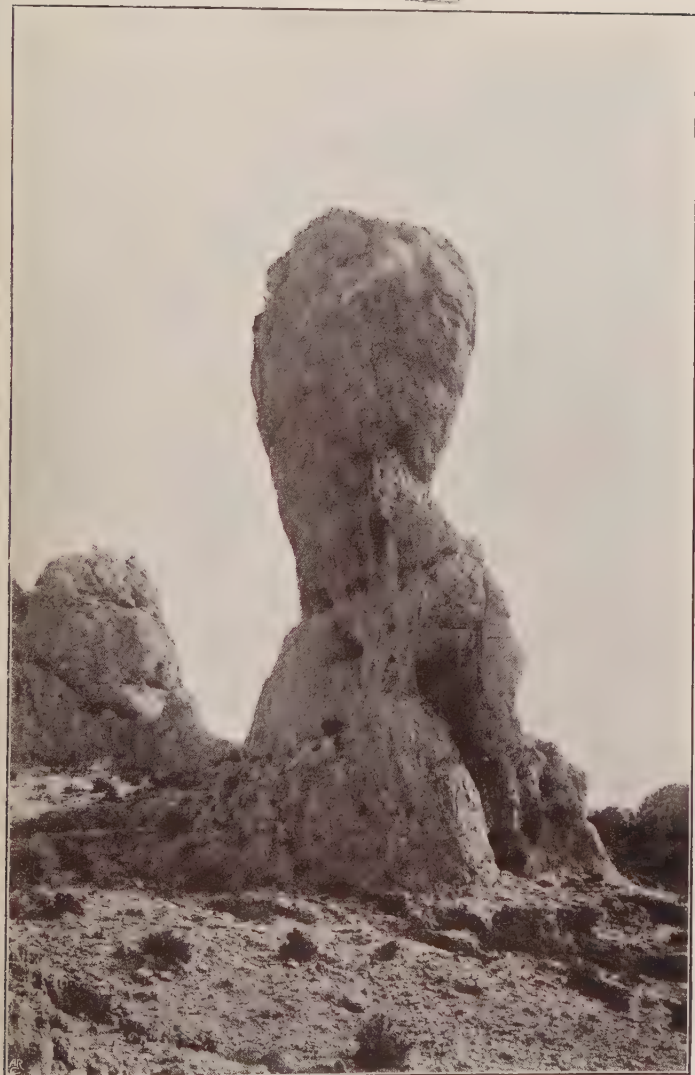
now only be traced on foot. The sparkling stream slides over contorted slate rocks, and trout dart through the pools. The hillsides are covered with pale grey flowered heath and the stunted kermes-oak with its glistening leaves. This, the *Quercus coccifera*, never grows higher than five feet, the *garus* it is that gives its name to the *garigues*, the desolate regions of limestone on which nothing else will grow. On its leaves feeds the kermes insect, round as a ball, and formerly supposed to be the fruit growing out of the rib of the leaf as does the berry of the butchers' broom. It produces a red dye, less brilliant than cochineal, and some of the Oriental reds are produced from it. The dye of the kermes is more permanent than cochineal. Suddenly on our eyes bursts Mourèze, one of the most fantastic groups of rock, castle, church, and village to be seen anywhere. We are disposed to regard the pictures by Gustave Doré of rock scenery interspersed with ruined towers as in his series, *Le Juif errant*, to be the creations of a fevered dream. But they are not so. He must have lived or travelled among the dolomitic formations of Languedoc, and thence drawn his inspiration.

The approach to Mourèze by the old carriage road is different; it is through red sandstone, soft and friable, and torn by streams into gullies. One would suppose that Mourèze had been founded originally by refugees from a world devastated by wars. It is concealed from view on all sides. It is Nature's hiding-place for persecuted men. At its back start up sheer cliffs of limestone, pink and yellow and grey, rising from 1,300 to 1,600 feet. Dolomitic limestone is composed of carbonate of lime and carbonate of magnesia, and the texture is mostly crystalline and granulated.



Each grain, having a power of resistance different from the other, yields or remains under the influence of the air and rains, so that alongside of massive rocks, eroded, hollowed out, perforated, or protruding in knots and elbows, are heaps of sand formed by the decomposition of the cement that held the grains in place. Thus are obtained the most bizarre and varied shapes of rock. All that imagination can picture of what is strange is found here—dismantled towers, gigantic monoliths, excavated walls, narrow gullies between monstrous shapes, great porticoes, pyramids standing on their heads, grouped together, and among them cottages clinging to their sides, a church on a ledge above a precipice, and over all a castle, the walls of which can hardly be distinguished from the rock out of which they grow. Contrast adds to the picturesque effect. The dolomite bristling with needles lies in the lap of a great cirque or cradle of more compact calcareous rock, disposed in regular horizontal beds, and attaining to a top over 1,610 feet that supports the ruins of the Romanesque church of S. Jean d'Aureillan. These walls back the scene on the north. The south is closed by the Puy de Bissou, clothed in woods, 1,450 feet. To the west is the mountain of S. Scholastica, 1,500 feet, and wooded ranges to the east of less elevation complete the enclosure and the screen that hides Mourèze from the world without.

The dolomite formation of Mourèze forms an almost continuous belt from Bédarieux to Bories and the north of Clermont. The region of Carlencas on this line presents an equally extraordinary appearance. The same rock is found north of Lodève, above Pégairolles,



THE SENTINEL, MOURÈZE



where they constitute the picturesque passage of l'Escalette.

The castle is mentioned in records from 790; it is called *Castrum Morelinum*, or *Morazios Villa*; *Mourezés* in 1625, and *Mourèze* in 1659.

The church, of two bays, has a seven-sided apse, and is of the thirteenth century. It is vaulted, and has no aisles. The tower is square.

The train will take one to Lodève, an ancient cathedral city, and before that a Roman *Castrum Luteva*. Paris was also a *Luteva*.

When Charlemagne completed the expulsion of the Arabs out of Septimania, he made of Lodève a county under his empire, and granted considerable privileges to the bishops.

There arose by degrees three powers to dispute possession of the land, the Municipality, the Count, and the Bishop, representing the people, the aristocracy, and the clergy. The history of Lodève is thenceforth a history of their conflicts for pre-eminence. In the tenth century arose a man who gave a new direction to affairs. Hitherto the counts had retained the mastery; now the Church would attempt to grapple with their power.

This man was Fulcran, who ascended the episcopal throne at the age of thirty in 947. He was noted for his beauty, for his grace of manner towards all men, so that, although a member of a noble family, he was greatly beloved by the common people. He wrote nothing; he was above all an orator and a man of action. He began to build a tower to his cathedral. The Count Eldin, who occupied the Castle of Montbrun, ordered him to pull it down. Fulcran refused.

Meanwhile the oppressions of the people by the count had become intolerable. They were crushed with taxation and denied municipal rights. The tower served as an excuse for a quarrel. Gentle as he was, Fulcran was determined to come to conclusions with the count. At his word the citizens rose, were aided by the country folk, Montbrun was stormed, and the bishop held Count Eldin prisoner till he had given guarantees not to continue his misrule. When Fulcran died in 1006 he had marked out the course his successors were to follow. They continued to snatch from the seigneur one right after another, and when the county passed into the hands of the Duke of Rodez, the Castle of Montbrun went by way of purchase to the bishops, and they became both spiritual and temporal lords of the county.

But what all this while of the people? At the outset it had assisted Fulcran in his strife with the count; it had contributed to effect the revolution that finally transferred the temporal power from lay into ecclesiastical hands. The ambition of Fulcran's successors knew no limits. After having conquered the seigneur they attacked the municipal liberties.

The people of Lodève soon saw that they had changed masters for the worse. A struggle broke out between them and their masters that caused much blood to flow. One bishop was driven from his palace. Later, in 1202, the inhabitants sent delegates to the prelate, Pierre de Frotier, to complain of his unendurable exactions. He refused to admit them to his presence. Then the mob broke in on him and made him swear to grant concessions. He appealed to Innocent III., who at once relieved him of his oath. The people,

enraged at this bit of deceit, again rose, broke into the palace, and killed the perjured bishop. The punishment inflicted on the town for this act was severe. However, the citizens were determined on resistance, and at last the controversy was submitted to arbitration, and they gained most of what they had demanded.

The cathedral is of the fourteenth century. The nave of three bays has side aisles and chapels on the south side, one of which, dedicated to S. Michael, is recessed behind richly moulded arches. The choir consists of two bays, with a nine-sided apse with lofty narrow two-light windows in each side. A curious arrangement is the walling up on each side of the choir so as to transform the continuation of the aisles into lengthy independent chapels. On the north side is the richly adorned chapel of S. Fulcran. The west front has no doorway in it, but a beautiful rose window between machicolated turrets. To see it one must enter the gendarmerie which occupies this end of the building. Poor fragmentary cloisters remain on the south.

Ferdinand Fabre thus describes the interior of the cathedral:—

“It has a nave and side aisles. The choir is large, lengthy, and occupies almost half the church, which gives an impression of surprise, and awakes in one the unpleasant idea that there is a want of proportion in the general disposition of the monument. But when this vexatious impression has passed away, one admires the nine windows of the apse, of original design, enormously lofty, certainly not in the purest style. The Gothic of the South always retained something incomplete, coarse, disagreeable, and never attained to the marvellous proportion, to the supreme elegance, to the aerial grace of the North.



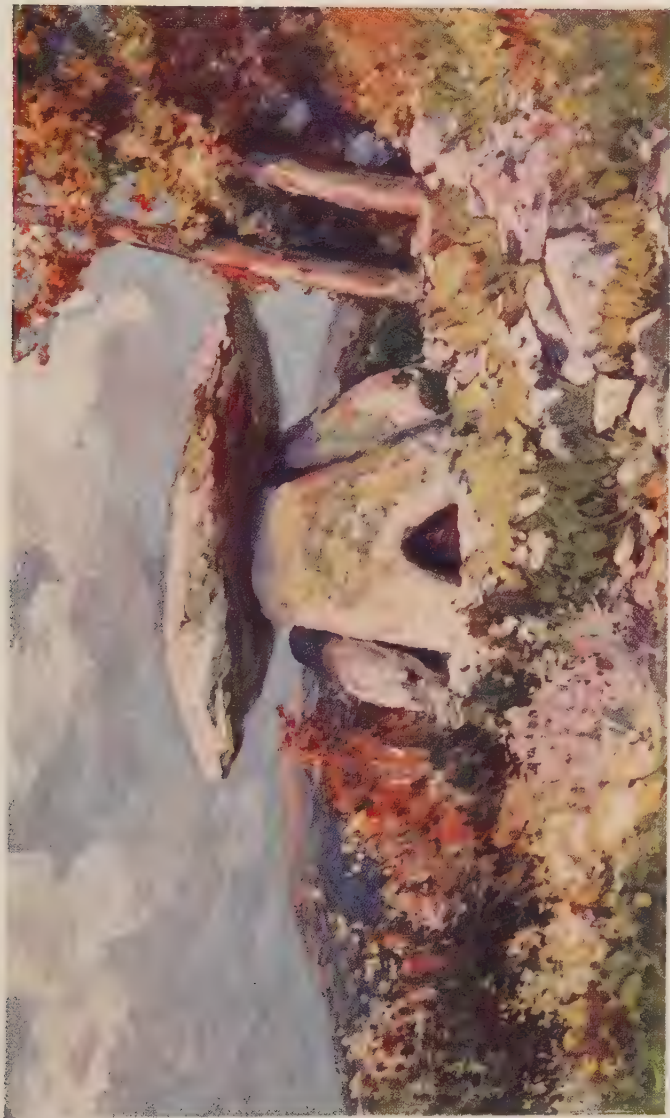
Nevertheless, with all its faults, the clumsiness of hand of an unskilled artist, who opened these windows to let in the light of heaven;—these immense bays, enriched with little pillars having carved capitals, divided into two by a single mullion that rises unsustained to the point where the tracery begins, and receive the ribs of the vaulting, lay hold of and retain one's eyes. The vaults, distributed in five bays, are designed not without dignity. The whole edifice, in spite of gross and many architectural faults—faults of construction, faults of arrangement—breathes a certain robust grace, a barbaric charm, making it the most interesting and most grateful of sanctuaries in our land."

A pretty, late flamboyant, melting into early Renaissance, chapel is between the cathedral and the cloister.

The old episcopal palace has been converted into municipal buildings, and the gardens into a fine promenade; so that the long conflict that endured for centuries has ended in the complete victory of the people. The bishopric was suppressed at the Concordat.

Between Clermont and Lodève the line runs through a red sandstone district, curiously bare and water-torn. The red stone seems to melt like butter under the rain, and with the least rush of water it swims away in masses, and grass can scarcely grow on the denuded surface.

At the distance of an hour and a half from Lodève is the well-preserved monastery of S. Michel-de-Grammont, now converted into farm buildings. It has a Romanesque cloister and a pointed chapter-house. The tower bears an octagonal campanile, rising out of a square base, the four windows of which are flamboyant.



DOLMEN OF GRANDMONT



The octagon is surmounted by a dome. The church is of great simplicity, and consists of a nave, vaulted, with a circular apse. On the north side is a pretty portal of three orders, resting on pillars with foliated capitals.

Near the church is a little chapel, on the front of which is inlaid an inscription in characters of the twelfth century, stating that it was consecrated on the 11th of the Calends of June in honour of S. Michael, but without date of the year.

At no considerable distance is a remarkably well-preserved dolmen. The end stone is pierced with a triangular opening, through which food was thrust for the dead who lay within. From Lodève the great upland *causse* can be reached by the road that leads to Le Caylar, through the valley of the Lergue and by the passage of l'Escalette. This was formerly a scramble up a stair of rocks, but now a good road has been driven up the heights to the vast plateau of Larzac, which has been seen as the train passes over it from Le Vigan to Tournemire.

There are caves to be explored near Lodève by such as enjoy such underground excursions; and these with marvellous stalagmitic and stalactitic formations. Such are the Mas de Bouquet, in the commune of Soubès. Another is the Grotte de Labeil, opening out of a cirque of rocks above the source of the Baume-Bauède, that once found its issue thence, but has now burrowed its way to a lower level.

Larzac (*Larga saxa*) is the most extensive and the most barren of all the limestone *causses*—a Siberian tundra in winter, an Arabia Petraea in summer.

It seems to be transpierced by the Cevennes, that

penetrate it at the Col de Sanctières, and issue from its huge bulk again at Mont Paon, a distance of fifteen miles. But from its abrupt precipices above Milau to the bold frontage of glaring white at L'Escalette is a distance of twenty-four miles. Elisée Reclus says of it :—

“The plateau of Larzac is a veritable table of stone. Water lacks on its surface. The soil, pierced by fissures, is hardly moistened by torrential rains. The drops falling on it pass through it as through a sieve and disappear. At certain spots the rifts in the rock are large, their walls have fallen in, and one sees huge funnels, avens, open in the calcareous surface, and descend to frightful depths. But almost everywhere the surface of the *causse* is uniform, and the subterranean wells are only indicated by superficial zigzags. Nowhere does a single spring rise.

“The inhabitants have for their own use and that of their cattle but the rain-water collected in cisterns or *lavagnes*, carefully cemented inside. Where water lacks, vegetation lacks also, and so also inhabitants.

“On most of the *causses* not a tree is to be seen, hardly a bush, save in dips offering some shelter from the wind. The rock is covered with naught but a short herbage, and the inhabitants, few in number, have utilised but scanty surfaces for the growth of barley, oats, and potatoes.”

When the water in the cisterns fails, the *caussenard* has to make a day's journey to descend into the valleys and fetch the pure liquid from one of the springs that issue there, either in boisterous cascades or welling up out of deep abysses, thrust forth silently by the pressure of the water from above.

A century ago the Larzac could be reached from

Lodève only by ladders planted against the precipice at the Pas de l'Escalette.

Le Caylar stands 2,400 feet above the sea, and was once a walled town, with its castle on a rock above it. From the summit the prospect is strange, and not to be forgotten. The eye stretches over the vast barren plain of the same white rock, that here and there assumes strange forms. At night, when the moon glares over it, these rocks with their black shadows stand up in the most fantastic shapes, and nothing can be conceived more surprising. One is in la belle France, indeed—but where is the beauty?

The flora of these plateaux is sufficiently interesting. A list of the plants that the Larzac produces will be found in Fabre (A.), *Histoire du Canton du Caylar*, Montpellier, 1895.

Le Caylar was the birthplace of Abdias Maurel, called Catinat, the Camisard chief, of whom I have already related some of the achievements.

When Cavalier submitted, Catinat in wrath withdrew and vowed to continue the conflict; but finally he also was compelled to abandon the struggle, and he retired into Switzerland in September, 1704. But he was restless, and two months later recrossed the frontier and entered into a conspiracy, the object of which was to remove the governor Bâville and the Duke of Berwick by assassination. The plot was discovered whilst he was in Nîmes, 20th April, 1705, and Catinat attempted to escape from the town in disguise, having shaved his face. A price had been set on his head. At the gate of Nîmes something suspicious in his appearance caused his arrest, and compromising letters were discovered secreted about his person. He was led to the Duke of



Berwick. He demanded to be exchanged for Marshal Tallard, who was a prisoner in the hands of the English, and threatened that if this were not done the English would make Tallard suffer the same death that was inflicted on him. His trial was short, and he was condemned to be burnt alive along with Ravel, his accomplice in the intended murder.

At the stake Ravel thundered forth a psalm of Marot, but Catinat, who was chained by him, died biting Ravel's shoulder, possibly in the delirium of his agony.

A very interesting walled town on the *causse* is La Couventoirade, for which there is a station on the line from Le Vigan. It was a commandery of the Templars, and after their suppression of the Knights of S. John.

La Couventoirade seems to attest to the present day the power of these military orders, and to reveal to us as in a picture the story of their greatness, their faults, and their misfortunes. The general plan is that of an irregular hexagon ; the southern portion is occupied by a huge rock that sustains the castle and the church. The ramparts of the town, that are almost perfect, were begun at the end of the thirteenth century and finished at the beginning of the fourteenth. The houses of the little place have a character that harmonises well with the ring of walls enclosing them. If La Couventoirade shows traces of decay produced by time or the violence of men, the town is, nevertheless, one of the most curious and best-preserved examples of a fortified place of the Middle Ages that can be found in Southern France.

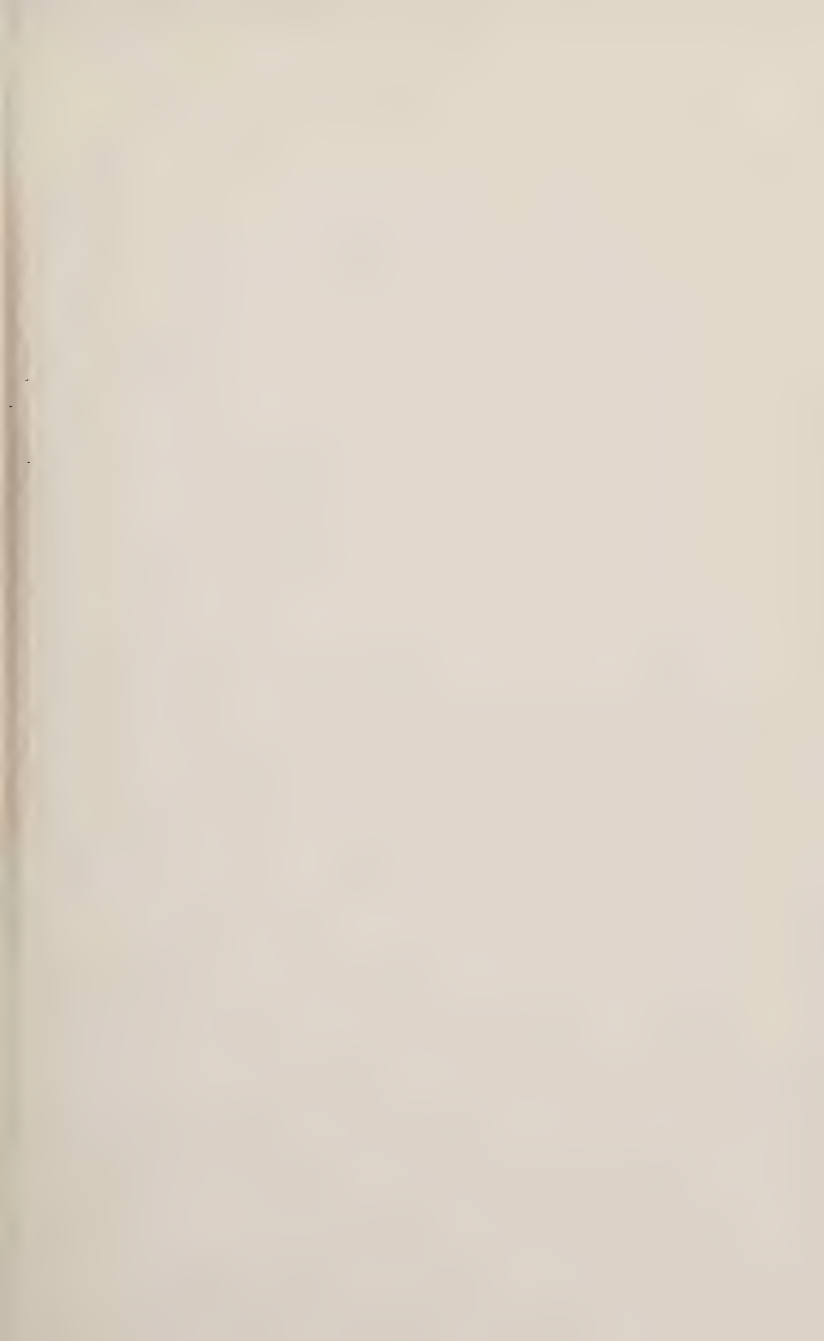
S. Guilhem-le-Désert is one of the strangest and most

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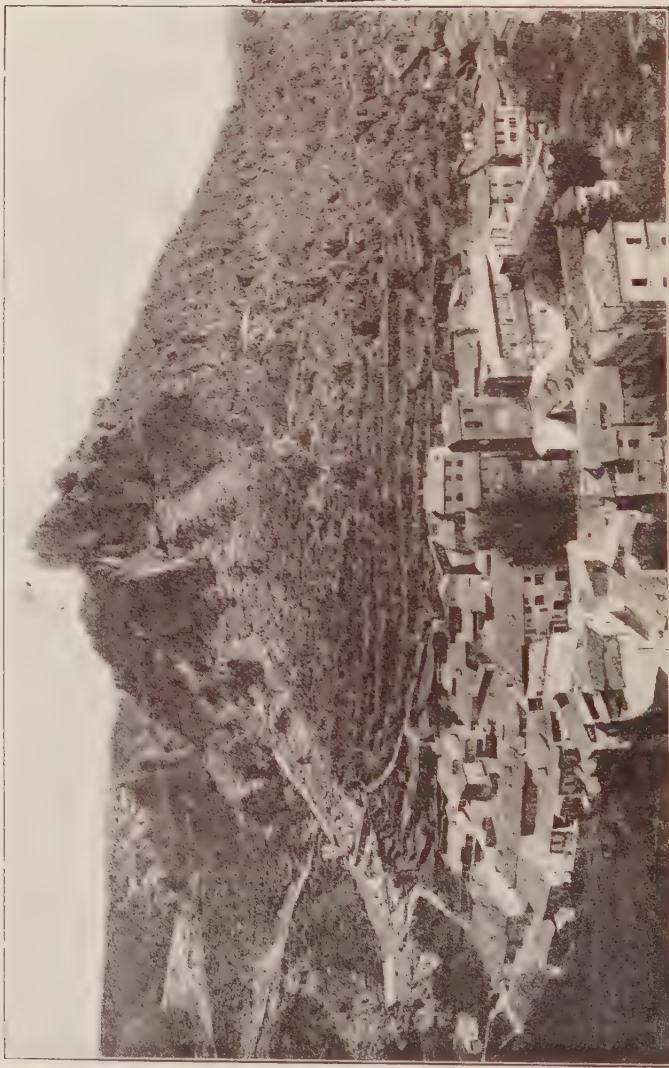


ON THE HÉRAULT





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S. GUILHEM-LE-DESERT

picturesque towns in France. It can be reached from Montpellier by taking the train to Aniane and walking or driving thence, or from Clermont in a carriage.

The Hérault escapes from its gorges at S. Jean de Foss, a little walled town, of which one gate remains. The church, crowded about by houses, is very early Romanesque and peculiar in many ways. It underwent alterations in the second Pointed period. There is a west tower, and the chancel is bored out under another.

Aniane is an uninteresting place, with a church built in the eighteenth century, very ugly. The huge abbey was also rebuilt about the same period, and now serves as a prison. I have not stayed the night at Aniane, and think that perhaps the inns may be better on the inside than they appear without. They do not invite to try their internal comforts.

The Hérault breaks out into the plain through a gorge of calcareous rocks, and it has sawn for itself a deep cleft in the bed below the roadway. The strata therein are strangely contorted. From Aniane a bridge is crossed, Le Pont du Diable, not very alarming, in spite of its name, and above is an aqueduct that conveys the water of the Hérault by a channel into the plain to Gignac and beyond that to S. André, carrying fertility with it.

Springs break forth from the cliffs, forming tables of calcareous deposit. One of these, of a high temperature, has constructed a large shelf extending towards the river, into which it flows.

The cliffs on each side of the ravine are very bare, striated, grey and yellow and white, spotted here and there with shrubs, aromatic and evergreen, and the



wild pomegranate with its crimson flowers may be found here and about Aniane.

As we ascend the valley, looking down into emerald green pools or wreaths of foam, we light on curious domed structures by the water. These are ancient mills, vaulted over with stone as a protection against floods that sometimes cover them many feet with rolling water, and in one place is a tower beside them up which the millers might fly for refuge when the torrent came rolling down unexpectedly.

All at once we reach the opening of a narrow lateral valley, where are the remains of a tower and walls, and where also are two humble inns, in one of which, as I can vouch, at very short notice an excellent *déjeuner* can be improvised. "Go up and see S. Guilhem," said the old woman of the inn, "and see what I shall have when you return." So we went, and on coming back she produced crayfish just caught in a net, also a rabbit; further, a couple of fieldfares plump with juniper berries; these, with vegetable soup, *foie gras*, boiled beef, etc., made a rare lunch.

S. Guilhem is a little town drawn out in a thread alongside of a small stream that rises at the base of a cirque of pink and yellow Jura-limestone above the place. It is itself surmounted by a crag towering high into the sky with what appears to be a lacework of stone on top, actually the ruins of a castle, called of Don Juan. Half-way up is a tower and gateway, through which alone the castle could be reached by a stair cut in the rock, but now the summit can be attained by a circuitous path cut for the purpose.

The village, or little town, grew about an abbey founded by Guillaume, Duke of Aquitaine, in 804. He



MILLS ON THE HÉRAULT



was grandson of Charles Martel, and he also was a hammer to smite the Saracens. In 793 he fought them at Carcassonne and drove them back; in 797 he wrested Narbonne from them. Then, pursuing them, he drove them out of Barcelona. War made him a misanthrope, and misanthropy made a monk of him. He retired to this desert, settled there with his sisters twain, Albara and Bertrara, and died there on May 28th, 812; and when he died the bells pealed of themselves. His heroic life and pious end became the theme of one of the longest and finest of the Provençal *Chansons de Gestes*, that of Guillaume de Courtenez—whence the honoured name of Courtenay in England. This is what Fauriel says of the romance:—

“William is the ideal of the Christian knight, fighting for the maintenance of his faith against the Saracens. The epic, in accord with history, does not always paint him as happy, as always victorious. It represents him sometimes as defeated, reduced to the most deplorable extremities, but never losing courage, and always vanquishing in the long run. No other epic of the Carolingian cycle is so deeply impressed with a sentiment of shuddering apprehension, which one may assume to be a traditional reflection of the contemporary feelings excited by the terrible struggle that took place in the South and lasted two centuries against the Andalusian Arabs.”

I think I must find place for a single episode from this poem. It relates to the parting of Guillaume and his wife Gibors, when he was about to go to Paris to ask for succour:—

“Sire Guillaume,” said she, “you go into France so highly lauded, and you leave me here, sad, among people that love me not. In the honoured land of France you will meet with

many a fresh-faced damsel, many a well-dressed dame, and therefore will lose your heart. You will forget me and this land where you have suffered such pains and endured hunger and thirst."

It must be known that at this time Guillaume and Gibors had been married something like five-and-twenty years. They were not a young couple just out of their honeymoon. Then he replied, kissing Gibors tenderly :—

"Gentle lady, do not concern yourself about me. Receive now my solemn vow, which I will keep faithfully. During my journey I will not change my linen or my coat. I will not taste meat or anything peppered. I will not drink wine nor water out of a goblet; only such of the latter as I can scoop up in my hand. And know further that never shall another mouth be joined to mine, which has been kissed and made spicy by your lips."

On reaching Paris, Guillaume was very badly received. The reason was that Louis the Emperor had married Blanchefleur, the sister of the Duke; that she was white only in name; was, in fact, a disreputable character; so dreading a scolding from her pious brother she had prejudiced her husband against him. When he reached the door of the palace, no squire came to his aid, no one saluted him, no groom offered to take his horse, which he accordingly tied to an olive tree. The southern poet, never having been in the north, supposed that the same trees grew there as in Provence and Languedoc. Guillaume entered the royal hall and saw the Emperor on his throne and the Empress in ermine and gold at his side, both crowned. Neither took notice of him, and all the princes and nobles turned the cold shoulder to him. And indeed he cut a

sorry figure. His garments were threadbare and ragged, his linen had obviously not been washed for months, nor was his hair combed and brushed. He was constrained to take a stool far back in the hall. Presently his wrath overcame his astonishment at this insulting reception. He stood up, as he saw his own father and mother, the Count and Countess of Narbonne, received with favour and seated beside the Emperor and Empress. In a loud and terrible voice he cried: "Louis! for all the great services I have rendered you, for all the battles I have fought for you—is this my reward?" "Set your mind at rest," answered the King; "you shall be rewarded by and by." "What!" cried the Queen, "will you rob me of my heritage to give it to him?" Then Guillaume shouted: "Tais-toi, impure chienne!" and he recited before all the court some of his sister's escapades. Then, striding through the crowd of nobles, he mounted to the throne, plucked the crown from his sister's head, and dashed it on the floor.

The abbey church is a fine Romanesque building, not earlier than the first years of the eleventh century. Of that date are the nave and side aisles. Choir, transepts, and porch were added at the end of the twelfth century. The nave communicates with the side aisles by five great arches supported by cruciform piers, and is lighted by three loftily placed windows. The ornamentation of the church is on the outside. To each transept is an apse. The principal apse has an arcade externally like the Lombardic churches on the Rhine. In the apse of the north aisle are the sarcophagi of Guillaume Courtenez and his sisters. That of the founder was so broken by the Camisards that it was not possible to piece it together again, as has been done with the tomb of the



ladies, which they also broke. Their sarcophagus is a Christian tomb of the fourth century, with Christ and the evangelists, or apostles, carved on it; at the extremities Adam and Eve and the Three Children in the Furnace. Perhaps the greatest treasure in the church is a black marble altar with panels of white marble and inlaid work of coloured glass, very beautiful, of the date 1138.

Pilgrimages arrive at S. Guilhem on Monday in Easter week and October 1st.

On the south side of the church is the cloister, very early, contemporary with the nave, and with traces of painting in it; but it has been pulled to pieces. In the midst stood a fountain that spouted water in as many jets as there are days in the year. But it was sold to a Paris dealer in antiquities, and where it now is cannot be said. The old monastic buildings, burnt by the Camisards, were reconstructed, and are now occupied by a Baron d'Albenas.

Some of the houses in the town are certainly Romanesque. There was a second church in the place, but it is now in ruins.

Returning to Aniane, it is worth mentioning that in destroying the old presbytery a marble slab was found bearing an Arabic inscription: "In the name of Allah, the clement and merciful, peace be with Mahomed. There is but one God. It is to Him, and to Him alone, that all power is due." A precisely identical inscription has been found at Montpellier, and this shows that the Saracens were in Languedoc not only as destroyers and raiders, but as inhabitants. Guillaume planted himself very close to where they had been, and whence he had turned them out.

And now my account is ended: not that I have exhausted the country. I have done no more than touch upon some points in it. It is a country that fascinates any one who visits it, that lays hold of his heart in strange fashion, and he is inclined when back in England to say, with Ferdinand Fabre:—

“Quand mon cerveau à vidé sur le papier blanc sa mince provision d'idées journalières, les coudes à la barre d'appui (de ma fenêtre) je coule là, en une paresse délicieuse, de longues heures à rêver. Mon âme alors s'envole au pays si profondément incrusté en elle, ce pays que je retrouve dans le moindre plis de mes pensées, ce pays qui, le plus ordinairement, lorsque j'ose écrire, me commande, et auquel j'obéis.”





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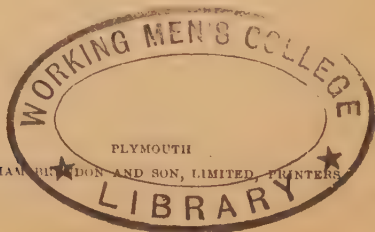
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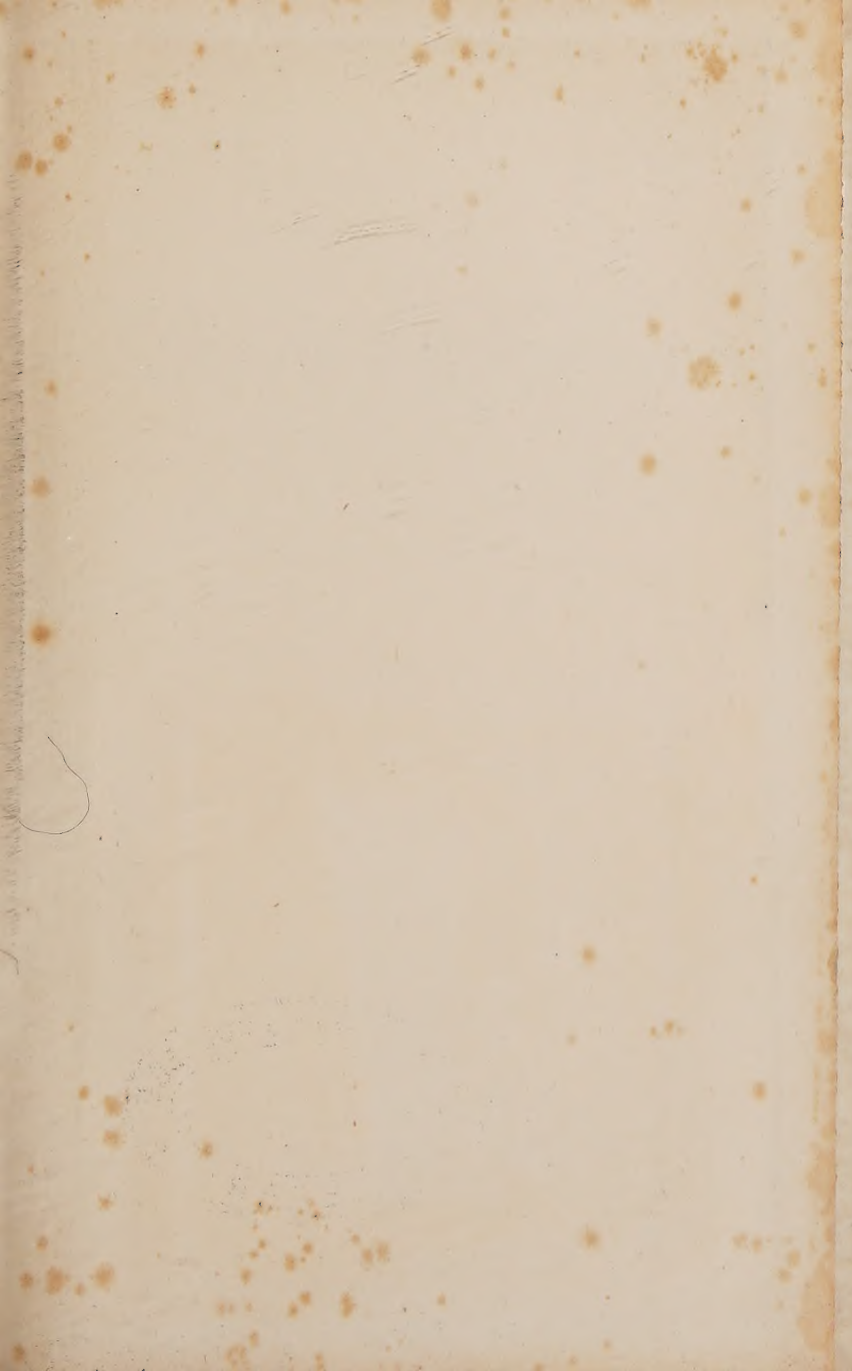
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